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The trees stand like ghosts in the heavy morning mists.
(See chapter 18)

FLORIDA ENCHANTMENTS

REVISED EDITION

By
A. W. DIMOCK

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JULIAN A. DIMOCK

A. W. Dimock
Peekamose, N. Y.
1915

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On
THE CAMP FIRE CLUB
OF AMERICA

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HOMOSASSA, THE BEAUTIFUL

Florida Enchantments

CHAPTER I

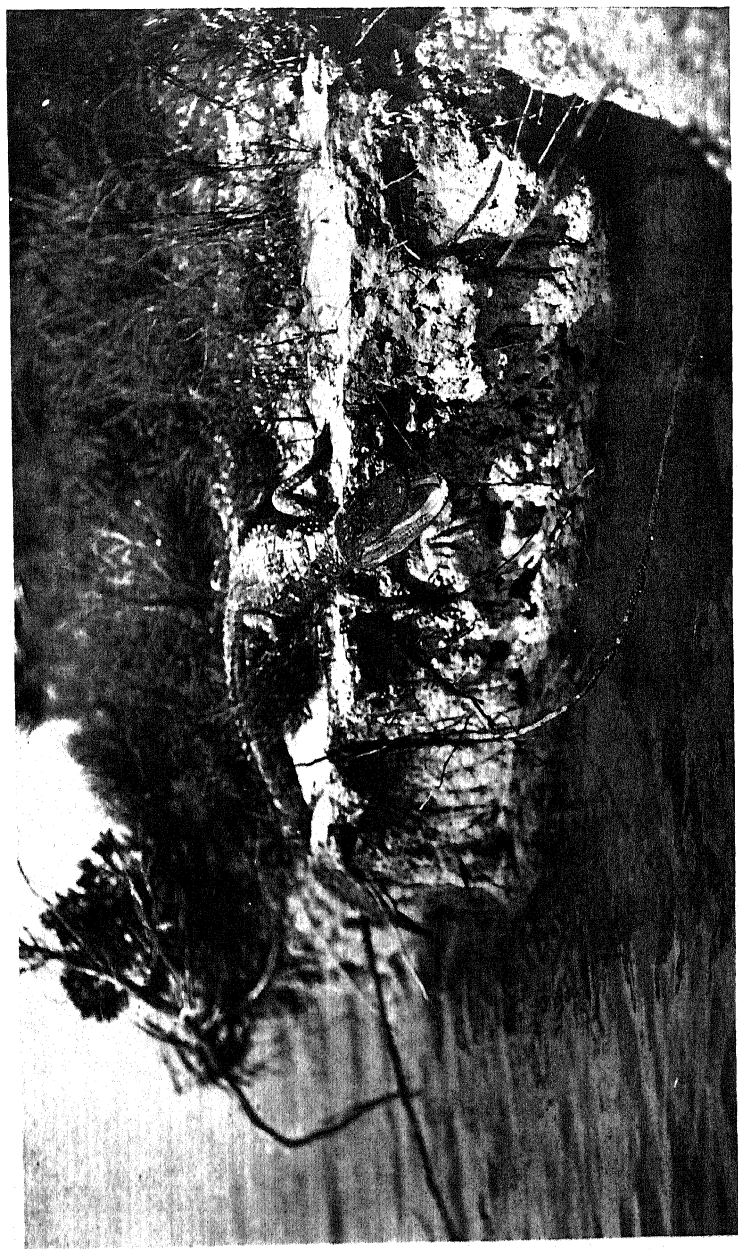
HOMOSASSA, THE BEAUTIFUL

FLORIDA, the Fascinating, cast the spell of her witchery upon me many years ago. I felt it then, I know it now. We were sailing, my family and I, up the lovely Homosassa and approaching the little islet which sentinels the small bay that fronts on Tiger Tail Island, once the home of the famous Seminole, afterward the manor of the late David L. Yulee, and at the time of which I write, a realized Utopia. From the narrow channel at Shell Island, the mouth of the river, we had sailed through four miles of river that sometimes widened into bays and at others narrowed, until at Hell Gate the big white sail of the sloop that carried us, seemed to fill the gap between the forest-lined banks. The water was alive with fish, the trees filled with birds and on every hundred yards of shore could be seen an alligator resting on his bed and then gently gliding into the water when our boat approached him. There was nothing to suggest human occupation, until, as the bay behind the beautiful palmetto key at Hagan Gap began to open to our view, a wave of perfume

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from a grove of blossoming orange trees rolled over us. Soon there spread before us the lawn, the old plantation house, from the piazzas of which orange blossoms or ripe oranges could then be gathered, and the orange grove which was dotted with little two-room houses singly, and in groups, through which any desired degree of isolation could be secured by guests.

As we reached the little dock we were met by the Boss of the island, a vivid personality, with a genius for housekeeping, who made of hospitality an art. In five minutes we were initiated members of her big family, the like of which for charm and congruity I have not since met. There were scholars and sportsmen, naturalists, geologists and botanists, travelers and scientists of national reputation, and neither a pedant nor a snob in the bunch. A little house in the orange grove, a hundred yards from the main hall, was assigned us, and within the hour we were settled there. Our nearest neighbor, a naturalist from Philadelphia, was working at his table, which was placed under an orange tree beside his cabin, mounting the skin of a rare bird which he had shot that morning. He showed me his room, filled with the tools of his profession, the weapons of a sportsman and the books and pamphlets of a student. It was all placed at my disposal so cordially that it seemed churlish not to accept something, so I borrowed his skiff and boatman for the afternoon, as one of the two skiffs for which I had arranged was not ready for me and I really couldn't keep off of that entrancing river. My little family followed in the



At the approach of our boat the alligator tumbled into the water.

Homosassa, the Beautiful

other skiff and a program that lasted for weeks was established. We were rowed up the Homosassa to Price's Creek, up which we were turning, when I saw the head of a deer showing above the tall grass as he stood in the water within a hundred yards of me. As I raised a warning hand my boatman stopped rowing and as the skiff steadied I shot my first Florida deer.

Within two hours of our arrival and one of our leaving the dock for a hunt, I had returned to it and was made acquainted with the custom of the community to welcome each day its returning members and congratulate or make friendly fun of them as the events justified. For dinner we had venison, wild turkey and duck, sweet potato pone and all the distinctively Southern dishes that the black chef in the kitchen could compass. After dinner the real life of the colony began. We gathered in the main room, in which was a big fireplace where burning red cedar logs filled the house with fragrance and left ashes of snow to pleasure the eye. The right kind of an appeal to the ladies of the family brought music of high degree from the piano, and a call in the big kitchen for darkeys and banjos always met with a response, but the chief charm of the evenings was the conversation. Each member of the community was expected to account for his day and descriptions of some of the incidents thereof were sure to drift into discussions that contributed pleasure and profit to all present.

My darky boatman was a young, sawed-off specimen, who wore a hat with a brim the size of an

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umbrella and who sat so low in the skiff that from a distance, as he rowed, nothing of him could be seen but a broad hat-brim resting on the gunwales and oars projecting from under it. On our second day we were rowed slowly up the river, viewing with much interest the oak, red cedar, palmetto and great flowering magnolia on its banks. Countless thousands of ducks were dotting the water on every side and in the broad shallows mullet leaped high in the air, hundreds in every minute. At the head of the river we floated on the famous Homosassa Spring out of which boils the river. The spring is almost circular, about a hundred feet in diameter and sixty in depth, and through its crystal clearness the smallest fish can be distinctly seen. As we lunched upon its bank a wild turkey lit upon a tree above us, mocking birds sang to us and a cardinal bird inquired if we intended to leave any crumbs. As I gazed on the marvelous spring, in the perfect peace of that balmy day, the spirit of the Fountain possessed me and I dreamed that I had found what Ponce de Leon so long and so vainly sought. Now, after many years which have taken their lawful toll of the body, I can yet believe that Perpetual Youth of the spirit is one of the Florida Enchantments.

As we had some hours to spare, I told the family that Tat and I would get an alligator to take home. Within a few hundred yards of the spring we found a small one about five feet long, which I shot and stowed in the skiff under the thwarts with his head toward the stern. Just as we reached the spring

and I had assumed the air of nonchalance becoming a successful hunter, the reptile came to life and scrambled toward me. Tat dropped his oars and grabbed him by the tail, while I stood up on the seat, slowly backing to the extreme end of the skiff as the head came on, until the jaws opened wide and I went over the stern. As I swam to the bank where we had picnicked, the two children were rolling on the ground in convulsions of joy, while their mother was struggling to repress the manifestation of a kindred emotion. Tat secured the alligator before he could escape, and after I had killed him again he tied him securely and carried him home. As we approached the dock and I witnessed the gathering of the clans and realized my soaked and shabby appearance and the public inquisition I must submit to, I longed for the ring of Gyges.

Owing to the sporadic character of the supply of venison provided by her guests, the Boss contracted with a Cracker hunter for regular deliveries of that staple. She also bargained to teach him to read and whenever he came to the house the well-thumbed spelling book was produced from an inner pocket and the lesson recited. He was deeply interested, but the nearest I ever knew him to come to identifying the words of his lesson was when he spelled and pronounced "D-o-g" "Squeal." His camp was twelve miles from Homosassa, two of water, four of cypress swamp, and six of pine timber. One day an enthusiastic young member of the family insisted on going home with him for a hunt. The Cracker brought

him back the next day in a chastened frame of mind. After the first mile of swamp the hunter carried the rifle of the youth, after the second he added to his own load a buck that he shot. Three miles before the journey's end, he fixed up a camp and built a fire for his companion who could walk no farther. Then he tramped three miles to his camp, got bread, coffee, flour and blankets and returned to the youth. The colony did laugh a little, until an old hunter suggested that to qualify a man to laugh intelligently would require him to take a twenty-four-mile tramp with Hodges himself.

The laugh was not always on the man from the city. A Cracker, with a hound for driving deer, called at the Island one morning to take a sportsman, who lived in a Western city, out hunting. Mr. Mears, the sportsman, appeared with a rifle, and Wheeler, the Cracker, refused to take him unless he would exchange his rifle for a shotgun with buckshot cartridges. He said he was tired of making deer run over city folks, who couldn't hit them with a rifle at ten feet. Mears smiled at Wheeler's earnestness and pointing out an osprey that was sailing high in the air over them, said, "If I put a bullet through that bird can I go?"

Wheeler didn't reply.

"If I put two bullets through him can I go?"

Again there was no reply. Mears brought his rifle to his shoulder, sent a bullet through the bird, and as it was falling, pierced it with another. He then went hunting with Wheeler. My neighbor, the



An alligator at home.

Homosassa, the Beautiful

naturalist, took Mears duck shooting, over decoys from a blind, and the latter with his rifle made a larger score than the former who used a fowling piece.

The late Doctor Ferber, beloved of the colony, its fisherman *par excellence*, was the friend of all animals. Under his chair could be found the dilapidated family cat, whose series of misfortunes culminated in a lightning stroke that partly paralyzed her. The humorous donkey, who lifted pigs out of their pen with his teeth and then chased them around the grounds, was believed to have been trained by the doctor. Pat and Bridget, tame bears and the pets of the colony, obeyed him only, and when Pat got in the dining room and, sitting in the middle of the table, proceeded to eat the dinner which was just ready to be served, it was the doctor who took him by the ear and led him out of the house. When Bridget broke her chain in the night and, climbing on the roof, dragged six feet of trace chain back and forth along the ridge-pole for an hour, it was the doctor who coaxed her back to her post on the lawn and chained her there. Pat's wrestling matches with the colored boys were refereed by the doctor who mourned greatly when Bridget clawed the clothing of a lady guest to ribbons and was sentenced to be shot. When the hour of execution approached he fled from the island and on the following day refused to take his usual place of honor at the head of the table, because it involved the carving of the roast of that day.

In those days alligators were accepted as natural enemies of mankind and the thought of holding back

from slaying them never occurred to any one. For a while it was my daily program to find an alligator's bed in the grass, lie down upon it under a big linen hat, with a novel, a field glass and a Winchester, sending the darky boatman to hide with his skiff in some near-by creek, and then, basking in the sunlight, reading and dreaming by the hour, I would now and then lazily sweep with the glass the river's mirror-like surface, until a pair of shining eyes resting thereon some few hundred yards distant, announced the home-coming of the proprietor.

Quietly the glass would be laid down and the rifle slowly brought into position, with its sights aligned upon the advancing eyes. Soon the nose appeared, the top of the head rose above the water, its whole outline became visible, sank out of sight, reappeared and approached warily until I fired. The poor alligator would come to the surface, its four paws pathetically uplifted and its yellowish white belly showing. In a minute or two the body slowly sank into the depths, to be grappled for later.

I remember once having watched the water till my eyes ached, read Clark Russell's "Marooned" until I became drowsy, and was dreamily admiring the assurance of the author, in picturing his hero upon a deserted island alone with the girl he loved, and then adrift with her for days and nights in a small boat, and pretending that he didn't kiss her, and that she really married the idiot afterward, when I was startled by a slight rustling in the long grass beside me.

Homosassa, the Beautiful

I rolled over and "all the conduits of my blood froze up," Within two feet of my face was the end of the tail of a big alligator, whose great form, partly traceable through the tall sedge, half encircled me as I lay beside him. Whether he was asleep or only playing possum was quite immaterial. I was in a trap sure enough.

A plunge into the sluggish Homosassa would have only transferred the trouble to an element even less favorable to me. For long minutes I lay breathless, wondering whether my "victim" would "open the ball" with his teeth or his tail. Perhaps the delay was due to his inability to decide between two weapons of equal availability and efficiency. The beating of my heart sounded to me like the trumpet of Gabriel. I dared not shout for my boatman, and that black imp had been trained not to come until he was called.

Apparently the big saurian had eight or ten peaceful hours in which to arrange his program undisturbed. I thought of turning my thumb down as a hint to him to hurry up. The interminable minutes seemed slowly transforming themselves into days. A dark, familiar body swooped past within a few feet of my face. It was the pioneer of a flock of buzzards which followed me daily up and down the river and the coast. I recognized this particular villain by the familiarity of his manner, as well as the bullet-hole in his wing and his one game leg. He had become the living echo of my rifle and had kept tab on my victims for many weeks. Hitherto I had

willingly fed him and his family, but now—I felt differently. However, the outlook now was that the alligator would save me from the buzzard. I could no longer see the bird, but felt that he was on some near-by skeleton of a tree, waiting and watching with that cold-blooded patience which I had until now admired.

Time and again the waving of a blade of grass sent discordant vibrations through my nerves until the chills and fever of suspense became intolerable. Slowly I turned the rifle, which was pointed over the river and away from my bed-fellow, until its muzzle was directed toward the head, which I vainly wore out my eyes to locate exactly. As the hammer was raised, while the held-back trigger prevented any warning click, some measure of hope returned. One little glimpse of eye or ear and the brute's brains might be distributed outside the zone of mischief. But in a random shot there are many blanks and few prizes. The outline of the body was fairly indicated, but a reptile, shot through the body, is given until sundown to die, which would have left many hours with mischief in each minute.

Another rustling in the grass dispelled the vacillation which had afflicted me. The muzzle of the weapon was shifted to bear upon the body just behind where the fore shoulder was believed to be. The slow pressure upon the trigger was followed by a roar which broke a great silence, and a head was lifted high above me, with wide-open jaws, from which proceeded a hiss like that of many serpents. For-



The sunset was magnificent.

ward and back flashed the lever of the Winchester, and echo-like came a second report, while a stream of flame scorched the mouth of the reptile as a fortunate bullet passed through its brain.

As I gazed reflectively upon my late bed-fellow, the silence was broken by the voice of my boatman:

“Did he crawl on the bank while you’s asleep?”

“Yes, Tat, he crawled on the bank while we were asleep.”

CRUISING ON THE GULF COAST OF
FLORIDA

CHAPTER II

CRUISING ON THE GULF COAST OF FLORIDA

THE essence of cruising is exploration and adventure. It is the individual's response to "the call of the wild" which fills the canoes on the rivers and lakes of the country, lights the campfires which burn in its wildernesses, and puts fever in the veins of every man who has gazed upon the stars from the bosom of old Mother Earth.

I have no more thrilling memory than that of one long ago February night, when, with another truant, I rested upon a bed of hemlock boughs and first tasted the joys of the campfire. Without blankets, freezing in body but exalted in spirit, the very stars seemed to sing together for joy. Ten years later that comrade's name was given to his last camp, the Alamo of the plains, Beecher's Island.

An attraction, which can no longer be the enthusiasm of youth, draws me irresistibly from the roar of the machinery of modern civilization and gives rest when the wilderness is reached, whether I paddle amid rapids of icy water in the frozen north, or dreamily drift with the sluggish current of some tropical stream.

Cruising in the waters of Florida is the *ne plus ultra* of outdoor life. You are in the open all day,

sleep on deck at night, wear little beyond your birth-day suit, and treat the water around you with the familiarity of an amphibian. The life can be strenuous enough to strain the stoutest muscles and satisfy the wildest craving for excitement, or restful to the most worn-to-frazzles nerves.

The experiences of a recent cruise ranged from eating sapadilloes and sea grapes on a boat becalmed in the emerald water of the Bay of Florida, to being threatened by waterspouts and struck by lightning; from watching wonderful sunsets and talking philosophy to a girl, to chasing rattlesnakes with a launch and being towed by a devil-fish; from playing tarpon, to dragging a crocodile out of his cave, and from treading clams to a ride on a manatee.

In cruising it is what you do yourself that counts. You may take prescribed drugs by proxy with probable advantage, but you must live the cruising life for yourself. Catch your fish, shoot your game, gather your oysters and tread your own clams, and if you also cook them it will make for appetite and health.

Don't keep a sailors' boarding house. You will need a captain who knows the coast, but you should learn his trade for yourself. In a week you ought to understand the *rationale* of the simple navigation that concerns you and be able to execute all ordinary maneuvers. You will make mistakes as do all who make anything. I have myself borne the accusation that when during a heavy squall the sharp command came from my captain:

"Let go the peak halyards, quick."

I promptly turned loose the big chain of the hurricane anchor.

It is now a score of years since the late Colonel Ingersoll, not Robert, but a relative, handed a pencil sketch to Fogarty of Braidentown, on the Manatee River.

"What's this to Hecuba? I'm a builder of boats and you show me the plan of a house," said the latter, in substance.

"But I want you to make that house and then build a boat around it."

Thereafter, while the genial Colonel lived, the hospitable Karena, known to the natives as the Ark, threatened most of the water ways and ran aground on all the bars of the west coast of Florida, from Cedar Keys to Key West. It was the prototype of the cruising houseboat of that coast of to-day, and as the Colonel with prophetic instinct once remarked, lacked only a little steam tender to run its errands.

In place of the Karena we now see floating houses like the "Whim Wham" with every attribute of a home, from a chef to a canary, from a library to a pet cat, with sixty horse power engines in the basement, in which the owner changes his residence while he sleeps and only knows where he is living when his captain tells him. Glittering launches, polished dingies, and a uniformed crew go with this outfit, which suggests yachting rather than the cruising I care for.

Stately yachts, at stated times, rattle their anchor

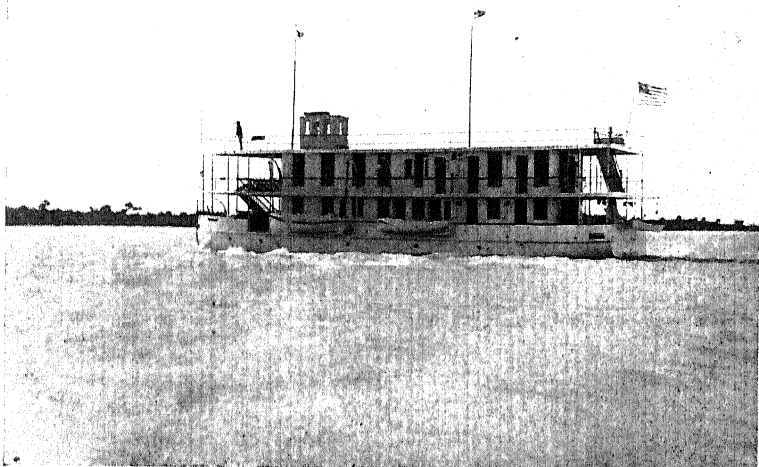
chains just within the mile-wide, ten fathom deep, Boca Grande Pass, while near-by their chartered craft lodge the guides who know the tricks of the tides and the tarpon, and reduce the labor of the fishermen to a minimum.

I have seen a well-known yachtsman quietly enjoy his magazine and cigar, on the deck of his boat while his guide trolled for tarpon within a few hundred feet. When a tarpon was hooked, the sportsman laid aside his magazine and was rowed out to the skiff of his guide, from which he captured what was left of the fish.

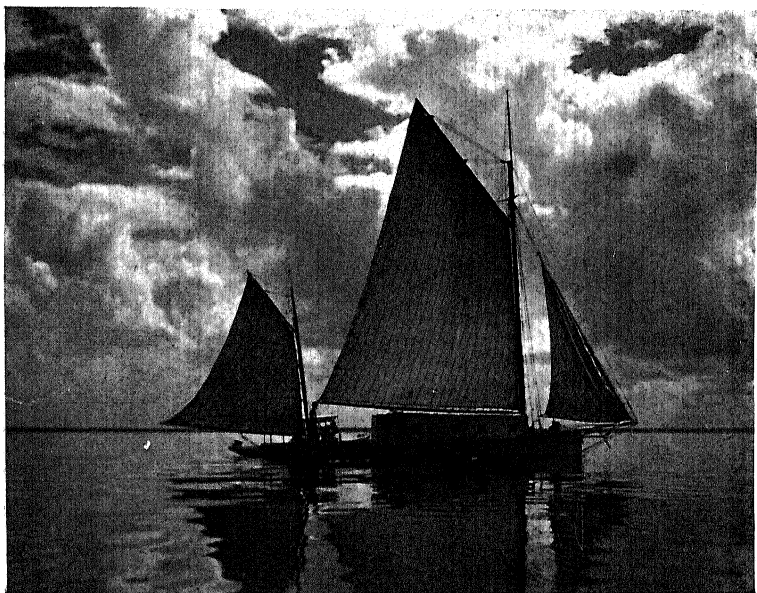
There are house-boats of simple construction which are moved about by tugs and often anchored for the season in one place. They make inexpensive homes with attractive features, but they are not cruisers.

Occasionally a should-be cruiser becomes conventionalized and vibrates between Fort Myers, Punta Rassa and Boca Grande, fishing in orthodox fashion on predetermined dates.

The interest in a cruise is often in inverse ratio to its cost. Two young men, with some knowledge of sailing and a genuine love for the campfire, arrived on the west coast of Florida with two months in time and two hundred dollars in money to spend. They bought a sloop, with a small skiff, for one hundred dollars, enlarged and fitted up the cabin at a cost of seventy-five dollars, invested twenty-five dollars in supplies, and buried themselves among the Ten Thousand Islands. Two months later they emerged with clothing in tatters, faces and arms red as the



The conventional houseboat, with every convenience from a chef to a canary.



"Becalmed in the emerald water of the Bay of Florida."

Cruising on the Gulf Coast of Florida

Indians with whom they had consorted, bodies rugged and stores of experience sufficient to illuminate their lives. They sold their outfit at cost, reducing their net expenses for two months to the twenty-five dollars paid for supplies, to which the wilderness had contributed without cost, fish, game and fruit.

A friend, of some mechanical skill, has a small cruising boat fitted with many conveniences of his own devising. He is something of a sailor and his wife is a better one. They are their own crew, and when a son and daughter are with them the family divide up the offices of captain, first officer, engineer and cook, and the outfit for cruising is ideal. A friend of the lady once said to her:

“Some day you’ll all be drowned together.”

“Yes, that’s another advantage, if we go we go together.”

Florida cruising is statistically safer than staying at home. Even taking cold seems impossible, although one seldom hesitates to go overboard on the instant to push the boat off a bar, dive up clams, or help with the nets.

On a recent cruise the girl of the party, who was enjoying the surf one evening, having been in the water continuously since the midday meal, replied to a remonstrance:

“My physician told me it would not hurt me to bathe four hours after eating, and I’m doing it.”

My latest cruise began as a family affair, with the girl, the Camera-man and a captain. Another girl was needed, and we borrowed the tree lady, who

having just evolved from her inner consciousness a tree book, which was counted authoritative, was now anxious to see some real trees.

Our equipment was the result of compromises between the requirements of deep sea cruising, and shallow bay exploration, and between cabin capacity and seaworthiness. It consisted of a yawl rigged, flat bottomed boat of thirty-seven by fourteen feet, with a draft of three feet. Our cabin was twenty feet long by twelve in breadth and we had with us two skiffs and a small launch. Fittings and furnishings were severely practical and included dark room, tools for all ordinary repair work, and fishing, hunting and photographing outfits.

Starting from Marco we gave the tree lady her choice between tarpon and crocodiles, and as she selected the former, sailed for Charlotte Harbor and the tarpon resorts of Captiva Pass and Boca Grande, where the season was at its height.

On the first day at Captiva Pass the tarpon scored. The tree lady was in a skiff with the Camera-man, making tarpon jump while he photographed them; the girl was on Captiva Beach gathering shells, leaving me to fish by myself, which I did by placing my tarpon rod on the seat beside me with the bait trolling behind the skiff as I rowed in the swift current of the Pass. There came a highly pitched buzz of the reel, a wild leap six feet in air of a frightened tarpon, and my rod flew over the stern of the skiff, leaving a straight wake to the Gulf. I fancy that the whole outfit, rod, massive reel, and six hundred feet of

costly line, was an exhibit that night at some club of tarpon, devoted to the baiting of fishermen. I should like to see the legend attached to it, to know at what my weight was estimated, and to hear the accounts of the contest, that I might compare the stories told by fish with those told about them.

We were fishing for the camera, and when the hooked tarpon ceased to pose they were turned loose, with a single exception. The tree lady wanted some tarpon scales big enough to weigh the fish stories she was preparing for her family.

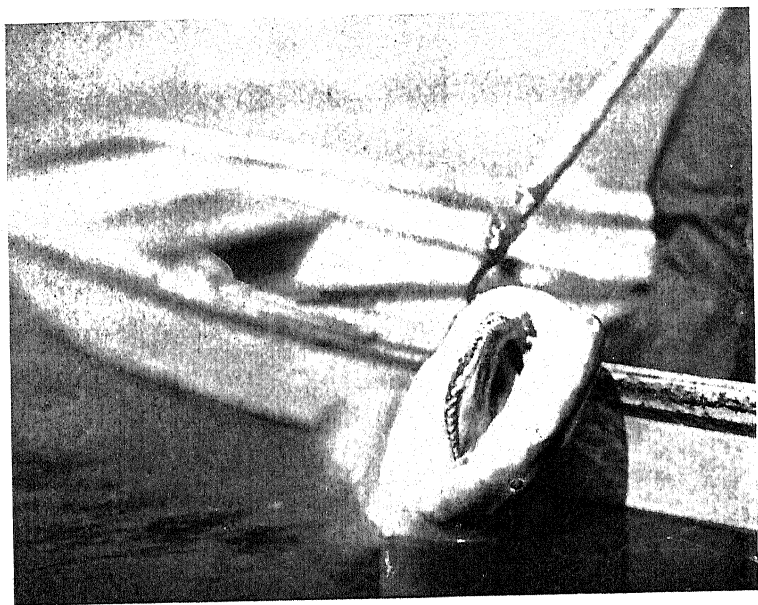
At Boca Grande we anchored north of the Pass, safe from everything but a gale from the northeast, which is what came to us with the setting of the sun. The strong tide held the boat in the trough of the sea and a wicked roll caused havoc in the cabin, where a bottle of oil breaking on the floor made walking thereon distressing. As the tide rushed past, it created a wake of phosphorescent fire, and an occasional wave breaking over us bathed the boat in liquid moonshine, while filling the cockpit with water that had to be bailed out.

We hoisted the jigger to hold the boat across the sea, and gave the hurricane anchor a few more fathoms of chain. Our captain was on shore unable to join us. Four times he dragged his skiff through the surf and tried to row to us, but four times he was capsized and swept back. As the night wore on, the launch filled and sank and the remaining skiff was swamped, broke her painter and was washed ashore.

In the morning the captain succeeded in reaching us, although his skiff sank under him just as he caught the line we threw him. We made tackle fast to the launch, lifted it until it could be bailed out, and then hoisting a sail with many reefs, spent an exciting quarter of an hour in clawing away from the beckoning beach. We sailed to a little land-locked harbor south of the Pass, and the next day returned and dug our skiff out of the sand where the waves had buried it, and recovered the widely scattered oars, lines, seats, and other boat furniture.

Following the storm, the fishing at Boca Grande was marvelous. The mile-wide Pass was filled with minnows by the thousand million, making dark patches upon the water, often many acres in extent. Among them porpoises rolled, thousands of tarpon leaped, the fins of hundreds of great sharks cut lanes through them, uncountable cavalli, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, ladyfish and other predatory small fry, devouring and being devoured, beat the water into surf-like waves, while, moved by a single impulse, here, there and everywhere, minnows by the yard or acre were leaping three feet in the air, filling it with rainbow tinted masses of spray. Everywhere the water was covered with dying minnows and spangled throughout with their scales.

As our skiff was rowed among them, tarpon leaped about it drenching us with water and throwing hundreds of minnows and other little fish in the boat. A small fish, which had fallen aboard, was put upon a tarpon hook and as it dropped overboard it was



The fisherman's *bête-noir*.



The lay of the loggerhead

swallowed by a jack-fish which in turn was seized by a tarpon. A great shark took up the trail of the tarpon and a moment later had bitten him in two, at the same time striking the skiff so vicious a blow that I was glad to remember that, contrary to current superstition, the sharks in this country never attack a human being.

Tarpon fishing with the camera is the apotheosis of sport. There is yet to be discovered anything more picturesque and thrilling than the leap of the near-by tarpon, filling the air with prismatic drops, and the gleaming silver of its gracefully contorted body brilliantly reflecting the rays of the sun.

Only less spectacular, because of its Lilliputian scale, is the leap of the lady fish, sometimes called skipjack, which rises to a fly and gives an acrobatic performance that makes the best work of any known game fish look like thirty cents.

Sea trout, Spanish mackerel, channel bass and other game fish kept the larder full and gave continuous sport at every pass in Charlotte Harbor and Pine Island Sound from Gasparilla to Punta Rassa.

Half an hour with a landing net on the shore would fill a bucket with crabs, while on any moonlight night from May to July great turtles could be found crawling on the beach and turned over for stews and steaks, or followed to their crawls for the one hundred and thirty to one hundred and eighty eggs that would be there in the morning.

We beach-combed for shells, from Gasparilla to Big Marco Pass, all but the tree lady, who explained

that she was under contract to produce a standard work of reference on conchology and must approach the subject with a mind that was blank. She left a blank when she sailed for the north from Marco, whence we turned south for the crocodile country.

From Coon Key to Sand Fly Pass our course lay outside the Keys and we ran before a gale under jib and jigger, landing disgracefully among the bushes when we tried to stem the tide that flowed from Chokoliskee Bay. Here we found a party of Seminole Indians, laid pipe for a visit to their camp, and obtained a full-grown wild-cat, or lynx.

We made a cage for Tom, who day by day grew more ferocious and had to be fed at the end of a stick. He knew the exact length of his fore leg and just when it was worth while to strike at us between the bars. He nearly ate up his cage in his efforts to get free, but when the door was finally opened, hesitated long before he came out. He then walked slowly, growling at everybody but so surprised by the indifference with which he was regarded that he soon began to make advances, and finally laid a tentative paw upon the hand of the captain as he stood at the wheel. Thereafter he became friendly, sometimes too friendly, occasionally jumping playfully upon anyone who happened to be sleeping on deck, which, until we got used to it, was exciting.

From Pavilion Key south the coast is one vast bank of clams, perennially inviting the visitor to go overboard and tread for them. One night, when anchored with light tackle a few miles below this

key, a gale from the southwest dragged the anchor, a big wave lifted us and at the top of a spring tide dropped us on a high coral reef.

The next morning we were many yards from water with the chances that we were settled for a month, but happily a favoring wind that day raised the water enough to enable us to haul the boat back into her element.

As our cruise led us through crooked channels in the shallow waters of the Bay of Florida, we often ran aground, but by promptly going overboard could usually push off into deeper water. Once we had to dig the boat out, loosening the mud under it with a hoe and washing it away by a current from the propeller of the launch.

At Madeira Hammock we anchored for a crocodile hunt in the interest of the camera, and for ten days in skiffs explored creeks and bays in the pursuit. We turned aside once to follow with a harpoon three big fins traveling tandem that belonged to a fourteen foot sawfish, whose thousand pounds propelled a broad four-foot saw, armed with fifty-two teeth, through schools of smaller fish. He belonged to the detested shark family and we wasted no sympathy on him as he towed us at racing speed through a mile of creek and bayou.

We caught a number of crocodiles and took with us, for shipment to the Bronx, one ten-foot specimen which we had captured in his cave, and sailed for Marco where the Camera-man left us for New York.

On our way up the coast the cat and the crocodile quarreled and to save the eyes of the saurian we put him overboard one evening with a rope around his body. During the night he died, mysteriously. The lynx swam ashore in response to the crowing of a cock and perished in a hen roost, but not mysteriously. Both had been prematurely promised to the Zoo in New York and I was mortified, so I visited a rookery, captured and shipped a dozen pelicans to the Zoo, and again sailed for the crocodile country.

We started on Friday, wherefore the girl predicted disaster and reminded us thereof on the following day when a heavy rain squall struck us, shut us up in semi-darkness and proceeded to box the compass with the boat. When the squall got through with us we were under bare poles with the jib the only hoistable sail.

Favored by the tide our launch carried us into Everglade where we found material to put our rigging in order. Here I borrowed a couple of youngsters not quite in their teens, for the sake of the youthful enthusiasm they presumably possessed. Yet when we reached Madeira Hammock they fished, hunted wild sapadillo trees and gathered the fruit, and cruised around in the launch, with tears of homesickness streaming down their cheeks.

At Madeira Hammock I stood again, harpoon pole in hand, in the bow of the skiff which my perspiring boatman patiently sculled among the keys, over the flats, and through the labyrinthic rivers that lie between the Bay of Florida and the saw-grass of the

Everglades. The harpoon was simply a pointed bit of barbed steel, only capable of penetrating one inch beyond the barb and intended merely to maintain communication with the quarry until it could be secured by other means.

One morning, just after we had started on our daily cruise, a series of swirls in the water near us, the language of which was then unfamiliar, seemed to tell of a frightened crocodile and that the hunt was on. We followed the zigzagging trail of muddy water as fast as we could scull and pole, getting occasional glimpses of a fleeing something, until the full view of it under the bow of the skiff gave me the chance I was seeking.

As the harpoon struck a broad back, which was not that of a crocodile, the creature rose above the surface, and as it did so its big beaver like tail covered me with a deluge of water. Then as it struck and nearly swamped the skiff, I realized that I had at last found the manatee, which I had vainly hunted during many years.

For hours we chased the creature, keeping a light strain on the harpoon line, frightening him as he came up to breathe, until, exhausted, he rose more and more frequently. I then made a score of unsuccessful attempts to lasso this specimen of the wild cattle of the sea.

Finally, the manatee came to the surface to breathe, so near the skiff that I put my left arm around his neck as far as it would go, and tried to slip the noose over his head with my right. The sudden lifting of

his head threw me upon his back, while a twist of his big tail sent me sprawling.

We were swamped four times while working the manatee into shallow water, where we got overboard, fastened a line around him and soon had him under control, although when the captain got astride of the creature, he was promptly made to turn a back somersault. Docile as our captive had become, he was yet eleven feet long, of massive proportions and a weight which was difficult to handle. We tore the seats out of the skiff, sunk it to the bottom and standing upon it succeeded in getting the sea cow over it. We lifted on the boat, bailed out the water and were paddling the over-laden craft out in the bay when a cataclysm left us swimming side by side while a submerged skiff was being towed gulfward by a rejoicing manatee.

We soon recaptured the animal and persuaded him into shallow water, where I herded him while the captain went to the big boat for an anchor and cable with which we made our captive fast, giving him two hundred feet of rope in an excellent sea cow pasture.

We were now candidates for a dungeon and liable to a big fine because of our unlawful detention of this highly protected mammal, so we sailed for Miami in pursuit of an *ex post facto* permit.

The authorities were good to me when convinced of the educational destiny of the manatee and in a week I returned with permits in my pocket, promises of free transportation by rail and steamer to the New York Aquarium, telegrams of congratulation from

the Zoo people, and lumber for a tank for the manatee, only to find no trace of anchor, cable or captive. Our cruising boat had been struck by lightning in Miami and the shock had been serious to all of us, but it was as nothing in comparison with this.

For a day we followed the zigzag trail of the anchor flukes, through a water glass, over half a mile of the bottom of the bay until we came upon the anchor, cable, and worn-through harness from which the manatee had escaped.

I returned to Marco, where I left the girl, took aboard a thousand miles of gasoline and four weeks' provisions for two, and sailed south with my boatman to capture a manatee. We explored the waterways between the Everglades and the Gulf, from Capes Romano to Sable. We sailed up broad rivers which narrowed until the bowsprit plunged into the bushes at every tack, and the towed skiff gathered oysters from overhanging mangrove branches as it swung against the bank. We followed the contracting channels with the launch until we were flying at full speed through crooked creeks, with bushes from the banks sweeping our craft on either side. When the branches closed over the stream, we dragged the skiff under them to the Everglades or the end of the creek.

As we followed rivers through shallow bays the churning of the propeller and waves rolling up behind us gave warning when we left the channel. Being lost among the Ten Thousand Islands is one's normal condition and without significance. So long as one

remembers that the sun rises in the east, he can find himself, but if he leaves his boat for an inland tramp—that is different. Alligator hunters have told me that they seldom knew and never cared where they were when hunting in the swamp. They just went anywhere for a month or two and came out when they got ready.

We struck waterspout weather off Shark River when conical clouds sent swirling tails dancing over the surface of the water which they sometimes touched and drew upward in huge swaying columns. The next day our boat lay becalmed at the mouth of Rodgers River, which we explored in the launch. As we started, graceful frigate pelicans floated high above us with motionless wings, while on the water about us their awkward namesakes filled pouches with food for their families and flew homeward with the curious intermittent strokes peculiar to these birds. The round head and bright eyes of the grass-eating green turtle bubbled up for a moment above the water, in pleasing contrast with the grosser head of his loggerhead cousin. Water-turkeys dropped heavily in the river as we passed, then quickly thrust out snake-like heads above its surface to gaze at us. Herons, big and little, blue, white and green, flapped lazily out of our way with discordant cries; brown curlews, roseate spoonbills, and white ibis sat undisturbed upon near-by trees; egrets and long whites forgot the bitter lessons that man's cupidity and woman's vanity had taught them, and even a monkey-faced owl, big and white, unknowing how rare a



Shell mounds of aborigine antecedents, flanked by cocoa and date palms.

Cruising on the Gulf Coast of Florida

specimen he was, turned goggle eyes upon the gun beside me.

At the head of the river a tropical storm burst upon us, followed by a calm, and filled the western sky with massive clouds wonderfully colored, which were duplicated in the mirror of the water until the illusion of a sky beneath us of infinite depth made me cling to the boat for dizziness. At the end of a long vista, the middle ground of slim palmetto and towering royal palm completed an unforgettable picture.

We had explored Lossmans River to the Everglades and were cruising the bays near its head when about dusk we saw a big rattlesnake swimming toward a mangrove key. To cut him off compelled us to run the launch full speed into the key. The skiff in tow came surging up beside us and the snake was between the two boats. We got the snake in the skiff, where the captain held him down with an oar, until I had him safely by the neck. After extracting the reptile's fangs I tied him in the skiff to be skinned for mounting the next morning. He was six and one-half feet long and had ten rattles.

Sometimes as we cruised, the big eyes of a wondering deer gazed upon us from a bit of meadow. Once I snapped the camera shutter on a black face with white eyeballs framed in an opening in the mangrove bushes, and on the same day we exchanged nods of half-recognition with an alligator hunter in the depth of the wilderness upon whose head was a price.

The days left us were few. Sweet bay leaves had taken the place of coffee, palmetto cabbage was our

Florida Enchantments

principal vegetable, cocoa plums, custard apples, wild limes and lemons, our fruit; and hour by hour we measured the gasoline left in the tank. One morning, with scarce two inches left, I estimated that we could go through Shark to Harney River, up that to the Everglades and return.

Far up the river we went, among beautiful keys, between richly wooded banks, past Golgotha camps of alligator hunters and trappers of otter, in channels choked with grass which had to be cleared from the propeller every few minutes, along shores covered with wading birds, over waters alive with alligators and thickly dotted with the heads of fresh water terrapin, until the launch was stopped by a solid mass of lily pads covering the stream and held in place by stems eight feet long, through which startled alligators made their way along the river bed setting the pads above to dancing mysteriously. Forcing our way in the skiff through half a mile of the pads we reached the Everglades, and following an Indian trail pushed far out on its surface for a final interview with a region which, although desolate, was yet strangely fascinating.

When but a mile was left of our return trip, a frightened manatee just ahead of our launch rolled his body half out of water, like a porpoise, and throwing his tail in the air started down the river. This was our last chance and we followed his every turn. When he turned and headed upstream to escape us we were so near that again he leaped half out of water and soon was so exhausted that he rose for

breath every few seconds. My hopes, which had died, were resurrected and already I was drawing up the skiff for the final act, when the motor stopped with its last drop of gasoline and the manatee chase was ended.

As we silently poled the launch homeward, my mind ran over the results of the hunt. We had seen a dozen manatee and had a calling acquaintance with half that number. We were familiar with their slightest appearance above the water and with the signs they left beneath it. We had seen them as Romeos and Juliets and often when within a few feet of one had only been thwarted by the darkness of the water which in the rainy season pours from the cypress and mangrove swamps.

A tiller rope broken during the excitement of a quick turn had saved one from probable capture, and as I remembered that an impulse of emotional insanity had held my hand when a mother manatee, with an unweaned calf pressed close to her side, rose beside me, I thought with bitterness of the poet who wrote:

“The quality of mercy is not strained.”

But I knew where the creatures lived and when we reached our boat, just as the stars came out, I had determined that in the hunt for a manatee it was only the first chapter that had closed.

THE CAPTURE OF THE MANATEE

CHAPTER III

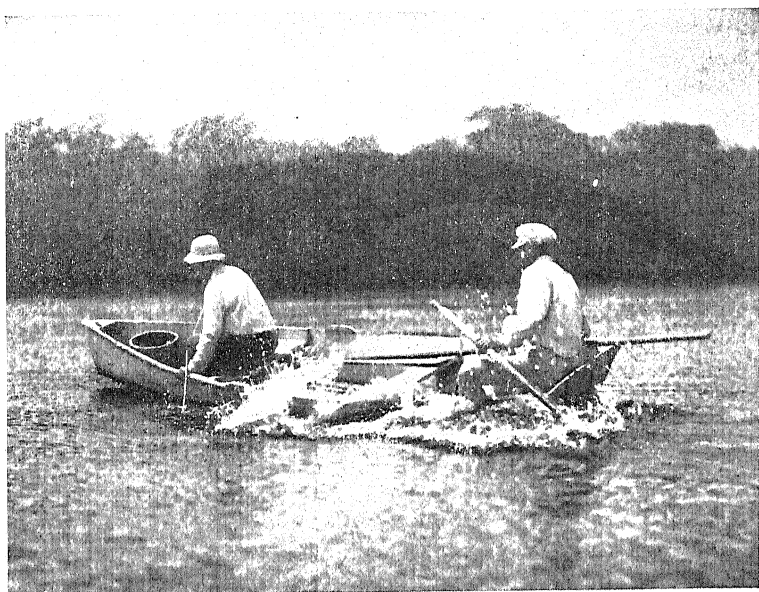
THE CAPTURE OF THE MANATEE

IT was due to the Aquarium, and my own self-respect, that I made good to them my tender of a manatee which was lost through my own indiscretion. It was for this that the Camera-man and I, with our outfit, returned to the manatee country.

For weeks, in our efforts to capture a sea cow, we exhausted our ingenuity and used up our material. We stretched nets between the banks of rivers which had been their highways, but sophisticated manatees turned back and traveled by some other route, while what was left of our costly linen net after it had been set across the channels of a few deep rivers, with strong tides and bottoms of jagged coral rocks, was mostly tears and tangles. We built a platform on a skiff to hold a long net of large mesh amply provided with corks and sinkers, and towed it behind the launch over the bays containing the richest areas of manatee pasture. Bits of floating grass, rising bubbles, streaks of roiled water, swirls on the surface or black dots in the distance that melted from our sight as we looked, put us on the trail. The "chug-chug" of the approaching propeller frightened the quarry which sprang half out of water, throwing barrels of it high in air, and spurted away. Then

the hunter-boy with telescopic eyes got upon the bow of the launch, the sailor boy sprang into the skiff with the net, the Camera-man stood by the motor while I held the wheel, and all studied intently the surface of the water. At first, a line of swirls rising in the water made pursuit easy, then the wheel rolled to the motion of the hand of the boy on the bow, until we overran the creature or, no signs appearing, the motor was slowed down, waiting for the cry of the first to recover the lost trail. Once in five minutes that black head rose to the surface for a second for breath, and in deep water this often proved our only guide.

If we succeeded in keeping the trail for a few hours, the manatee became tired, or flurried for want of breath, came up oftener and swam more slowly, until at a signal the boy in the towed skiff cast overboard one end of the net with its anchor, and with the launch at full speed we tried to run the net around the animal. A dozen times the bobbing corks told us that he was against the net and our hopes ran high, only to fall as he backed out and sought until he found an avenue of escape. Leaving the boy with the skiff to take in the net, we again followed the manatee, sometimes throwing over his head a cast net, only to see it slide harmless down his back, and sometimes throwing a lasso weighted with lead over his head and getting in return a blow from his tail upon the bow of the launch that nearly swamped it and always knocked somebody overboard, while his handy flipper pushed the lasso over his nose. When-



A sudden dash of the creature nearly swamps us.



The powerful tail lifts the skiff.

The Capture of the Manatee

ever success seemed really near, darkness always stepped in to thwart us.

We found one day a manatee so big that we didn't care to fool with her until some of her surplus energy had been worn down. The Camera-man struck her from the skiff, in the middle of her broad tail, with a tiny harpoon attached to three hundred feet of light line. After the first dash was over and the manatee swimming quietly, I held the skiff as near her as possible until she came up to breathe, when the Camera-man laid a noosed rope over her nose. After we had hauled the Camera-man aboard and bailed out the boat, which had been nearly swamped, he insisted on trying again. This time he stayed under water longer and came up on the wrong side of the boat just as I was getting mighty anxious looking for him on the side he went down. He then consented to play the creature a little before tying her up. For hours the manatee towed us through a labyrinth of waterways to an unknown region which I am ready to identify as the mosquito center of the earth. One of the boys tried to follow us with the launch, but got in trouble with the motor. I exchanged places with him and got in more trouble. As the hours rolled on and darkness settled upon us, the manatee was the only one of the party who wasn't lost. The launch propeller choked up every few minutes with manatee grass and I had to hang overboard, half under water, to clear it. Then I went tearing through creek after creek in search of the skiff, which I once lost for half an hour. Every quarter of a

mile I stopped the motor, and blowing a horn listened for the shouts that came faintly to me across the keys, and after a few strenuous moments with an exasperating fly wheel, was again plunging through the darkness, searching for an opening that might lead in the direction of the calls I had heard. Finally the motor broke down altogether and it was only a fortunate turn in the course of the manatee, aided by a lot of poling, that reunited us. I undertook to play the sea cow from the bow of the launch while our engineer, the Camera-man, put the motor in commission. Soon there was a sound of cranking and the machine chug-chug'd for a few strokes, after which there was silence broken only by heavy breathing. To a courteous inquiry, which I threw over my shoulder, the reply sounded like:

"Damn the engine."

We organized the work to be done. I sat upon the bow of the launch, with the line tub between my knees and the line in my hands. The manatee was to tow us through the night, but fifty pounds was about the maximum of strain I dared put on the little harpoon. Foot by foot the line must be yielded as the animal increased her speed, and foot by foot taken back when it slackened. The Camera-man and I must share this work, to night, to-morrow night and all other nights until the end.

Our sailor boy had sprained his wrist while trying to start the engine and could hold the wheel, but not the harpoon line. The hunter boy stood by the skiff, ready for the emergencies which proved to be

The Capture of the Manatee

the most constant features of the work. He made a dash through the darkness for the near-by shore and got bits of dead wood, pieces of buttonwood and rotting black mangrove, from which a smudge made the launch, within its drawn curtains, solid with smoke. But the man in the bow, who held the harpoon line, must keep his head and arms outside. When I swept my hand across my smarting face, it became smeared with blood and mosquitoes. The bursting upon us of a tropical thunder storm, pouring water down in masses so nearly solid that it was hard to breathe, relieved us of the insect plague. Each blaze of dazzling light, so brief as to be almost useless, was followed by the blackness of Erebus. We were carried east, west, north and south, through lagoons, bays, creeks and rivers in darkness that could be felt, knowing nothing of where we were, steering always as the line to the manatee led.

We had had a strenuous day, with nothing to eat since an early breakfast, and the hours of the night passed slowly. The storm was followed by a heavy gale from the southwest, but the stars came out and we recognized the big river we were on and knew that we were heading for the Gulf. Already we could hear the waves breaking outside and our sailor boy was nervous.

“What shall we do, we can’t live out there?” said he. I told him we could live if the manatee turned north, outside the river, and kept inside the shoals, but if she headed down the coast in the channel we would cut loose. The mouth of Broad River forms

a delta and the hunter boy, by rowing ahead of the manatee in his skiff and splashing with his oars, turned her into the north channel which was shallow and full of oyster bars. Here we turned her again, just as the Gulf opened out to us, and as we passed the south channel, going back, the tide which had just turned in helped to persuade her to continue up the river. For a mile she was good and then turned into a narrow fork on the south side of the river, where roots and snags threatened us each moment. Half a mile up this stream she towed us into a narrow gully and having given the line a turn around a snag, returned to the fork.

Thirty cents would now have purchased our interest in that manatee, but our hunter boy went overboard, cleared the line, got back in the skiff and I handed him the tub just as the last coils of line were running out of it. He disappeared in the darkness down the fork, while we spent a few minutes in backing the launch out of the gully and a good many in persuading the motor to mope. When the main stream was reached we turned up the river on a chance that proved friendly, soon overtook the skiff, shut off the motor and were again in the wake of the manatee. There was trouble to burn as the creature headed for the cut-off that leads from Broad to Rodgers River, and both boys jumped in the skiff and headed her off with splashing, thrusting, oars, for the cut-off consists of two miles of crookedness, filled with snags, roots and overhanging branches, and is quite unnavigable for manatee-towed launches.

The Capture of the Manatee

As we approached the bays at the head of Broad River a most welcome dawn rose, tinting the surroundings and the situation. Even the pessimism of the sailor boy, which had covered him like a mantle since first he heard in the night the waves of the Gulf, slid from him. The manatee became placid and even friendly, swimming slowly just in advance of us and coming up at regular intervals for long, slow breaths. Once, as she lifted her nose above the surface, the hunter boy dropped a noose of half-inch rope over her head and quickly drew it taut. A tremendous blow from the tail of the manatee nearly swamped the launch and knocked overboard the boy, who came to the surface with the line he had made fast to the sea cow twisted about his own neck. She slipped the noose over her head in less time than it took to unwind him. After that we threw the noose over the head of the creature many times, until she was almost halter-broken and so accustomed to the rope that she played with it and us. When it tightened about her, she slid her flippers under it and deftly pushed the noose over her nose. If we slid it back farther than her flippers could reach, a flirt of her tail freed her. Once it caught on her soft nose and held long enough for us to make a rope fast to her flipper.

The manatee now belonged to us and we got another line around her, after which we removed the iron, with some difficulty and more duckings, and attempted to tow her into shoal water. For a time the frightened animal tore up the water and towed

us backward, but in two or three hours we had her partly stranded in a tiny cove in a big bay at the head of Broad River. After she became quiet we got in the water with her and tied her with every string we could raise from launch and skiff. A cable fastened her tail to the yielding top of a sweet bay tree, half-inch ropes led from her flippers to branches of myrtle that swayed but held, and we lashed poles, several inches in diameter by fourteen feet long, to her body with hundreds of feet of harpoon line carried around it, hoping to keep her from freeing or harming herself until we could bring to her our cruising boat, with materials and tools for the building of a tank that would hold her.

The big boat was then thirty miles from us by the nearest navigable channels, down Broad and Rodgers Rivers to the Gulf and up Lossmans to its head. Seven miles of this course was through the open Gulf, which a storm from the southwest was then making turbulent. We decided to avoid this risk and save half the distance by hunting our way by night through the labyrinthic, grass-choked waterways lying between the rivers named and the Everglades of Florida, back to the bay where we had left our boat. It was late in the night when we found her, the gale was increasing and the barometer stood at its lowest for six months, but minutes were important to our captive and we lost none in starting. As we worked our way down the river we broke our two-days' fast with snatches of cold canned food. We got down the river in safety, and after twice drag-

The Capture of the Manatee

ging on oyster reefs at its mouth, were soon being tossed by the waves of the Gulf. We had seven miles to make down the coast against the gale, and it took nearly twice that many hours, while always one of us stood by the jib and another held the main-sheet in his hands.

It was late in the day when, under jib and jigger, the *Irene* swept past the tiny cove and a big burden of anxiety dropped visibly from each one of us as we saw between the mangroves the upraised head of the great manatee. Our nerves had been worn to frazzles by excitement, loss of rest and food, and all hands needed the tonic afforded by the sight once more of our capture. Jib and anchor were let go and we went ashore in the skiff and stood on the bank beside the sea cow, where I could feel the beating of my heart, for, quiet though she seemed, the manatee was substantially free.

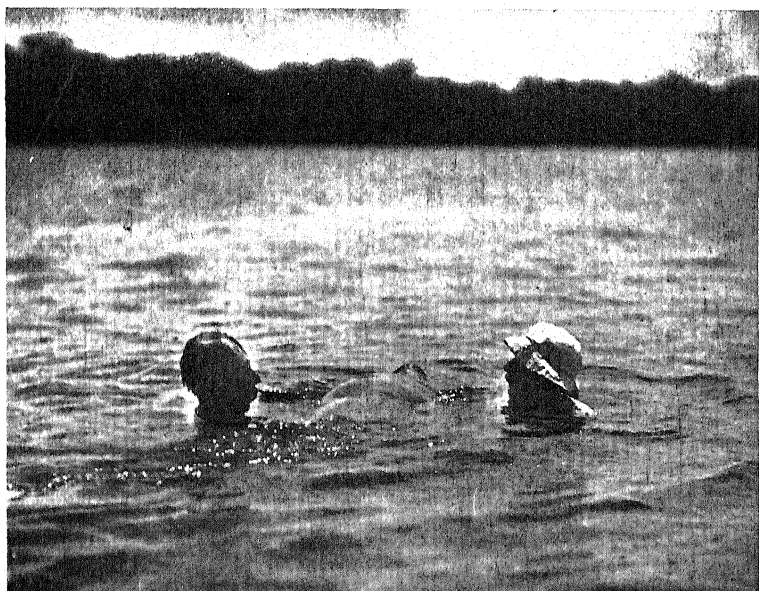
She had broken a harness of rope, fitted to hold the cable in place on her tail, shaken the cable free, and parted every string that bound her, excepting that attached to one of her flippers. There seemed small hope of saving her, but for the moment she was quiet, and we brought our big, four-foot-wide, skiff beside her and sunk it in the five feet of water where the creature lay. By pushing the submerged skiff, on which we stood, and hauling upon head, tail and flippers of the unresisting manatee, we got her in the skiff, the gunwales of which she overtopped by more than a foot, wound and tied ropes around boat and animal until confidence returned to me and I

took the first long breaths I had drawn for two days. They were few in number, however, for as we stood around the creature, in water nearly to our necks, the manatee, suddenly roaching her back until head and tail almost met, snapped the ropes that bound her. Then throwing upward her immense tail, deluging us with great volumes of water, she brought it down upon the stern of the skiff with a pile-driving blow that converted the craft into kindling wood. Crash followed crash and when her mighty struggles ended and we had all escaped from the maelstrom of her creation, it was relief enough that there were still four of us, all uninjured.

After breaking up our skiff, the manatee again became quiet and allowed us to carry heavy ropes around her and fasten them to trees until once more her escape seemed impossible. The animal was nearly thirteen feet long and her weight, by estimate, over two thousand pounds. When we provided material for a tank in which to transport a manatee, we had no such leviathan as this in contemplation. More lumber must be had, and more help was needed. Both might be found at Everglade, forty-five miles distant. Our hunter boy volunteered to be there by daylight if the launch motor would work. The Camera-man spent an hour over the engine, replacing parts that were weak or worn, guaranteed it for twenty-four hours, and the boy plunged into the darkness, through which for half an hour we heard his frequent stops to clear the grass and moss from the propeller blades.



He drags us into the mangroves.



View of back—looking forward.

The Capture of the Manatee

Little of my lost sleep was made up that night, with my thoughts of that boy driving up the coast, alone in that little craft, through the sea made by that southwest gale, now only half abated, and my nerves racked a hundred times by the thrashing of the monster tied within a hundred feet of me, while troubled dreams disturbed my slightest nap with demands that her bondage be made less cruel. From daylight I kept watch over her, piling wet grass upon her back as a falling tide exposed it to the burning sun. During the night we welcomed the chug-chug of the returning launch, bringing lumber, tackle and help. Working through darkness and light, it was yet noon before the big sarcophagus of a tank, thirteen feet long, four wide and four high, was built, calked, and ready for its occupant.

One end, which had been left open, was brought close to the animal and the box was lashed to trees preparatory to backing the creature in. I walked to the head of the manatee and laid my hand upon it as I had done a hundred times before. She was quiet now, but I knew she was all right. She had been struggling tremendously a few minutes before and was resting. I talked to her and told her that her troubles were over, no more ropes, just a few days in a nice box with fresh water and bunches of manatee grass, and then a big tank in a beautiful building, plenty to eat, and a million children to talk to her and pet her and hold out little hands for her to nuzzle with her soft nose. She was very quiet. I wondered if she found it hard to breathe—sometimes

I did, too—but her lips would move when I laid my hand on them—No ?—

The others stopped work and gathered beside her. The eyes didn't open, the lips didn't move she wouldn't breathe—and when I turned away I couldn't speak.

That afternoon she was prepared for a museum instead of an aquarium, and we learned that if only we could have got her safely to New York, the stork would have called at the Aquarium in a few days.

It was a month before we were again in the manatee country. We had put a motor in the cruising boat to help her out of tight places and taken a little skiff with a tiny engine for the shallow waters. The big tank was still anchored where we had left it and we hoped to find an occupant for it. We saw and followed many manatees without trying to capture them. Sometimes they were only calves and sometimes so far from our cruising boat that we were shy of facing the transportation problem. We were resolved never to tie another manatee until we had a tank ready for him. One opportunity came as the sun was setting, but I couldn't ask the boys to face with me a night of mosquitoes in an open skiff. The creatures, instead of being driven from their homes by our noisy presence, actually grew tame and we saw them swimming quietly and unafraid along the bottom of a river directly under our whirling propeller. When we finally struck one from the skiff we captured him in an hour. I held the skiff near the

The Capture of the Manatee

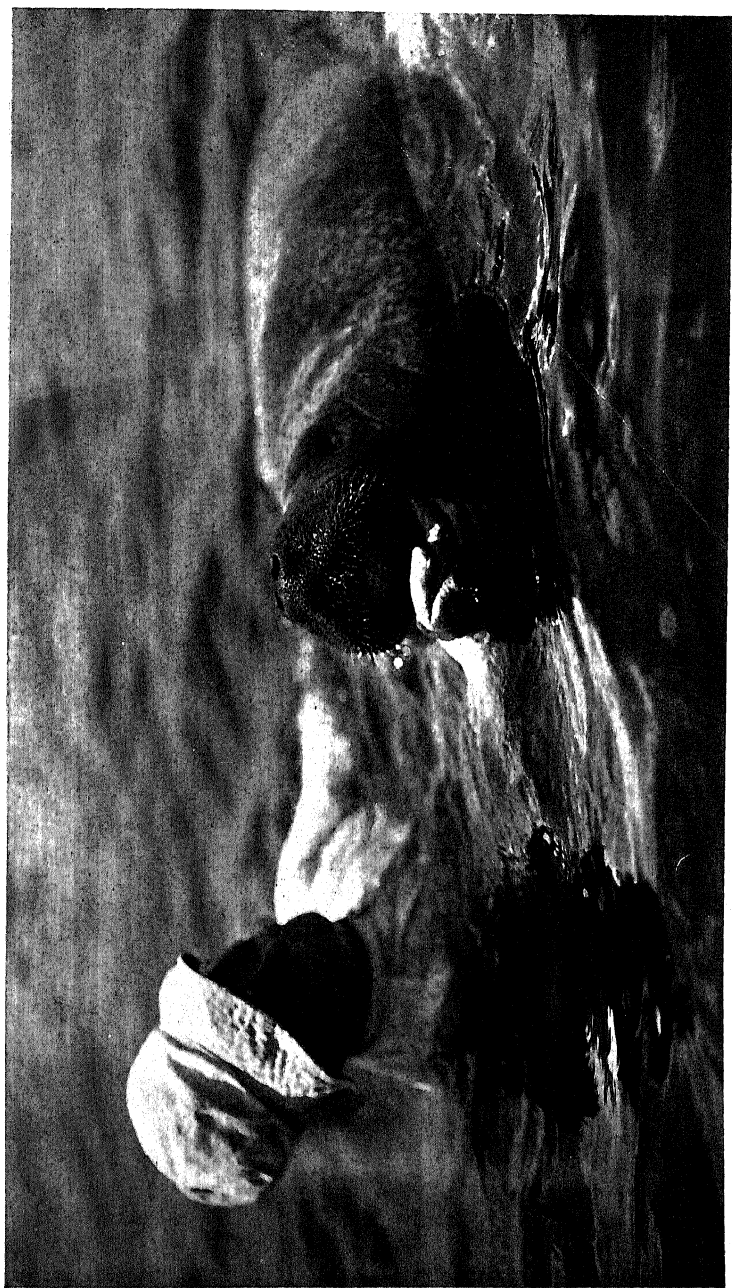
manatee, while the boys tossed oars over his nose whenever his head came to the surface. The Camera-man, in the power skiff, circled around us, picked up the floating oars and tossed them back to our skiff. When the animal's breathing was largely in arrears and he was compelled to hold his head well above water for several seconds, I placed a Brobdingagian scoop-net over his head. We had made this net of quarter-inch rope, with a two-foot mesh about six feet long, held open by two steel rings four feet in diameter, and with a puckering string of half-inch manilla. We held him tangled in this net until we could slide over him another of twelve feet in length in which we towed our captive to and into the big tank which we lashed beside our cruising boat. This tank was so much too large for him that he spent his time in getting jammed, breaking joist, and scratching the skin off his nose in his struggles to turn around. We needed a tank about a third the size of the one we had, also a lighter in which to tow the creature to Miami. There was another night journey to Everglade, both of the boys going on this trip, while the Camera-man and I nursed the captive, held his flippers, braced ourselves against the box and pushed his nose out of jam with our bare feet when his head got caught. When the new tank was finished and the manatee transferred he proceeded to knock the top off of his new quarters piece by piece with the roach of his back and the slam of his tail, while we spiked on new planks and joist until he quieted down. We bored

holes in the lighter, sunk it under the tank, plugged the holes, bailed out the lighter and it was up to me, as the only one on board who had made the trip to Miami, to pilot a boat, with cabin so big that sea-dogs called it a house-boat, towing a square-ended lighter with a timid thousand-pound specimen sloshing around in a big tank, over a hundred and fifty miles of shallow bays which I had forgotten, and complicated channels which I never remembered, to that town. I am not a bit of a sailor-man, but I had to pretend a lot, give courses with confidence, and no one on board worked harder than I, as I cudgeled my memory, studied the charts and tried to look wise during that little voyage. Trouble began early, for it was rough on the Gulf and the sailor boy spoke sooth when he said:

“It’s the Devil to tow a lighter.”

Forty hours later we delivered to the Florida East Coast Railway at Miami, a manatee, mad through and through, because for some stormy hours, he had been stood upon his head and tail, alternately, as the lighter banged its way over waves that were unpleasantly big for a craft of her build.

The Transfer Company took five hours to load the manatee upon a car, but the officials held the train for an hour, and as it started for the North, bearing my manatee, tagged to the New York Aquarium, I could think, for the first time in twelve months without chagrin, of my telegraphic tender a year ago of a sea cow that belonged to herself instead of to me.



Head of manatee. Strange creatures, as shapely as a fattened pig.

The Capture of the Manatee

The manatee left us, measuring ten feet four inches in length. His voyage of one week so agreed with him, that when he arrived at the New York Aquarium his average length, as certified to by New York journalists, was eighteen feet.

Three weeks later, on our arrival at Miami from our trip across the Glades, a telegram told me of the death in the Aquarium of the manatee, and I rashly wired to Director Townsend the promise of another.

Natural obstacles and climatic *mañana* had disposed of ten days when, one afternoon, we found ourselves in the manatee country, with tank and lighter, free to find the manatee we had promised. In the first hour's cruising we saw three sea cows together, about half a mile from the tank we had just built for one of them. We kept on the trail of one until the Camera-man had put his tiny harpoon in the tail of the creature. I had mentally placed an Aquarium tag upon him, when an uplifted end of the parted line showed me where the propeller blade had cut it before the motor could be stopped. Fortune now deserted us and for days we vainly churned with our motor every manatee haunt we knew within a hundred square miles, until we feared the animals had fled the country. I was getting low in my mind over the contract to deliver one sea cow when, as we rounded a point in the bay one morning, we saw two manatee, apparently a cow and a calf. As we lost sight of the mother, we followed the child which led us a merry chase. The Camera-man and the captain in the power boat, and the hunter boy and I in the

skiff, chased him through channels and over flats for two hours. We could have harpooned him often enough, had it not been necessary to strike him in the tail, which was elusive. When this had been accomplished we soon got a net over his head and tied him in the skiff, from which we tore out the seats and half-filled it with water. When the creature floundered, the skiff capsized, so we held it beside the power skiff for the miles and hours that lay between us and our cruising boat. Before the trip was over he was half domesticated and always stopped throwing bucketfuls of water over us with his tail whenever we patted him gently on his head. The baby weighed about two hundred pounds and the tank we had provided called for an animal of five times that weight. We sawed the tank in two, hoisted one half on deck and fitted it up for the infant. We dispensed with the lighter and carried the tank on the stern of the cruising boat, where the man at the wheel could soothe the child when it was frightened.

It is a strain on one's nerves and sympathies to be with wild creatures during the early days of their captivity. I have often left my bed in the night to make more comfortable a just-captured alligator, crocodile, wildcat, or otter, but when a manatee beats about its tank, rolling over and over and making a funny little squeak like a mouse calling its mamma, I generally get up and hold his flipper and talk to him until he feels better.

As we neared the end of our three days' voyage to Miami, the infant manatee became fretful, re-

The Capture of the Manatee

jected my overtures and petulantly thrust out the bits of manatee grass and other good things that I placed in his mouth. But he sucked my fingers until I fancied he was a nursling and my first purchase in Miami was a nursing-bottle outfit and a supply of milk appropriate to a six-foot baby. The wife of the druggist kindly explained to me the proper method of applying the nursery machinery to my baby, until I asked her what I ought to do if my baby, as was his custom, just staid under water and wouldn't come out to be fed. I was considering the construction of an apparatus proportioned to the size of the creature, from a five-gallon demijohn and a section of hose pipe, when I detected the infant privately eating chunks of raw cabbage and wisps of manatee grass as fast as he could flop them into his mouth with his flippers. I then offered him a plantain and he sat up in his tank to eat it.

An hour later, when his train was about to start, I bade him good-bye and held out my hand, to which he responded by superciliously extending to me one of his flippers while he gently rubbed his stomach with the other. For twenty months this manatee lived in his tank in the New York Aquarium and finally died of intestinal disorder, after having doubled in weight and established a record for length of life in confinement of a member of his species.

The Camera-man was low in his mind. Even the successful shipment of "Baby," as the Aquarium christened him, failed to cheer him. He complained

that his department had been ignored and instead of posing for him the captured manatees had chiefly been used to knock him overboard. He had sat up nights with the creatures, been eaten by mosquitoes, dragged all over creation, and whenever he got out his camera had been ordered to pull on a rope, or asked to hold a net.

We soothed him with promises of a manatee chase of his very own, with no net to bother him. The captain and I agreed to go overboard with the first sea cow we got a line around, or before, if necessary, and we started forthwith for the manatee country.

On the first day of the hunt the manatee won out. We found three, tackled one and went home early to patch up a broken skiff. I had a steel ring, four feet in diameter, fastened on the end of a harpoon pole, and at right angles to it. This held open the loop of a lasso and sometimes I was able to place it over or before the head of the manatee when he came up to breathe. More often, however, I went overboard when I tried it and sometimes the skiff was capsized. For when the creature's head was within reach of the pole, the skiff was within striking distance of his tail and he always struck. That was our trouble the first day. On the second day we hunted from daylight till dark without finding a trace of the animals.

By noon of the third day we were feeling depressed. Since daylight we had hunted over fifty miles of the best sea cow pasturage that we knew. We had followed trails of floating manatee grass in vain; rising



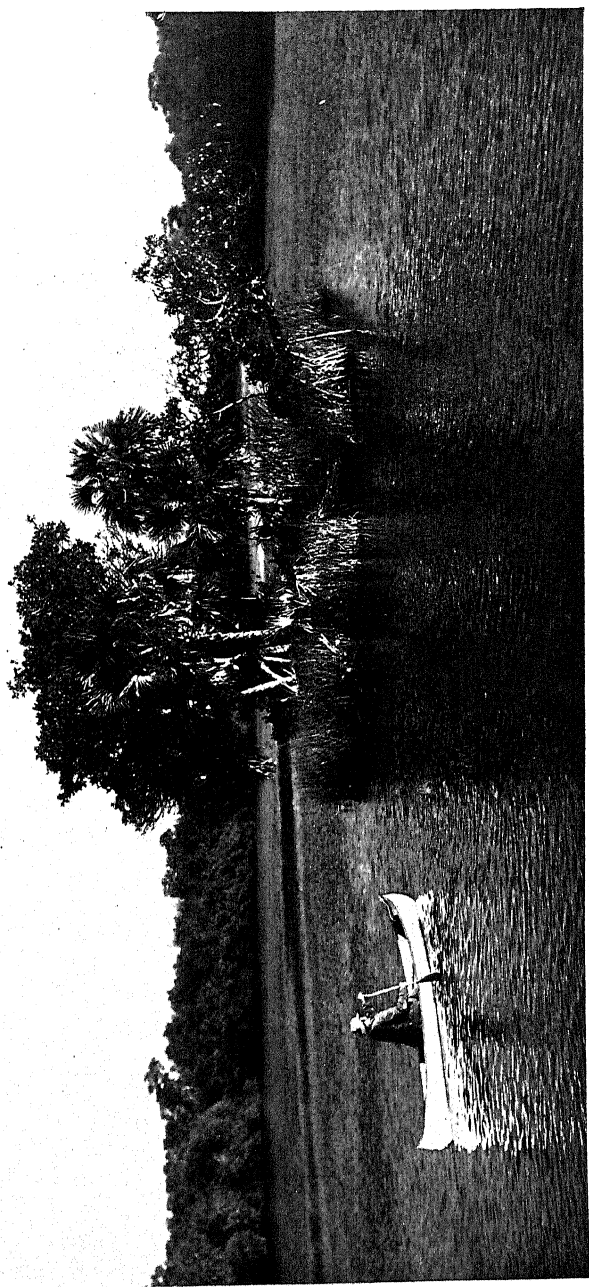
The flippers are of use to gather grass within reach of the mouth.

The Capture of the Manatee

bubbles proved to come from alligators; streaks of roiled water led only to frightened sting-rays; and the black heads that had appeared for an instant above the surface had all belonged to otters or porpoises. Tiny cat's-paws on the water had misled us and once we followed the ripple of our own wake, as it broke on a distant shore, halfway around a bay, like a pussy-cat chasing its tail. Just as we had satisfied ourselves that the bay didn't contain a specimen of the creatures we sought, a big manatee, frightened by the noisy churning of the approaching motor boat, leaped half out of water, just ahead of us. A moment later a series of swirls rising to the surface showed the line of the creature's flight. These were repeated several times and thereafter a faint trail of mud in the water guided us. Then, as all signs ceased, we stopped the motor and studied the smooth surface of the bay in all directions. Five minutes had passed when our hunter-boy saw a black nose appear for an instant two hundred yards behind us. Again we were on the trail, which we kept so closely for an hour that the quarry became flurried and out of breath. He swam back and forth, coming up to breathe every minute, and sometimes so near that we could have touched him with an oar. I was tempted to try lassoing him from the power boat but refrained, knowing the chances were even that he would sink the boat and at least ruin the camera outfit. The captain and I got into the skiff while the hunter-boy took the wheel and the Camera-man made ready his machinery. The manatee came

up beside me quite unexpectedly and when I hurriedly tried to put the ring over his head it landed on his back and I received a deluge of water in my face while the skiff barely escaped a blow from his tail that would have put it past repair. The power boat kept close upon the trail and after bailing out our skiff we took short cuts that kept us near the animal, which often rose for a second within arm's length, but it was another hour before we got the line around him, where it held for a time, which was fortunate, since the steel ring had been torn free in the struggle and had gone to the bottom. The Camera-man lost the first of the affray, his motor not being lively enough to compete with the sea cow. Its chug-chug frightened the creature until he dragged us under mangrove bushes that overhung a deep channel that ran beside the river bank, sending me to the bottom of the skiff and nearly dragging the captain overboard. Often he towed us at a speed that took us out of range of the Camera-man, then turning would swim directly under the skiff, playfully tossing a few barrels of water over us as he passed. He swam for long distances near the bottom of deep channels, only coming to the surface at long intervals for breath, then carried us across banks where the water was only five feet deep and we could see his every motion. In my desire to make the manatee pose for the Camera-man I sometimes approached too closely, only to have the skiff lifted half out of water by a blow of the creature's tail. Then the Camera-man shouted:

“Bully for you; do so some more!”



Tussock Key. A haunt of the manatee on Harney's River.

The Capture of the Manatee

And we did so some more, till we were drenched and the skiff had been almost swamped many times.

But the insatiable Camera-man, whose plates were running low, called out:

“More action! Why don’t you go overboard as you promised?”

“Here goes,” said the captain, as he landed astride of the manatee, which just then came up beside the skiff to breathe. He was promptly bucked off by a roach of the creature’s back and a slap of his tail, but caught him by one flipper, while I tumbled overboard and grabbed the other, just as the line slipped over the nose of the manatee. Thereafter we swam around together in a friendly way while the Camera-man circled about us in the power boat changing slides in his camera like mad. When at last he exclaimed with a sigh, “Plates all gone,” we measured the sea cow with an oar, finding his length eight feet and his weight, by estimate, five hundred pounds. Then loosing my hold of his flipper I swam beside him for a few yards until the quickening stroke of his big propeller left me behind, and as I turned and struck out for the skiff that drifted a hundred yards away, I overheard a soliloquy of the Camera-man:

“Guess I’ve got a monopoly of that subject.”

THE CHASE OF THE DOLPHIN

CHAPTER IV

THE CHASE OF THE DOLPHIN

A FAMILY of dolphins was piloting us through emerald waters in the Bay of Florida. One channel after another, in the labyrinth we were threading, had given out, and more than once all hands had gone overboard to drag the launch across banks where it would not float. The acquaintance with the channels shown by the dolphins, as they rolled and snorted a hundred yards ahead, led us to follow them, to the manifest betterment of our navigation. Twice the head of the family shot a dozen feet in the air in pure playfulness, making a thrilling picture that can be seen about once in a blue moon. Sometimes Mamma Dolphin raised her head above the surface of the water and fixed a big apprehensive eye upon us, while Baby Dolphin snuggled up beside her and lifted his little nose in comical imitation of his mother.

When the chug-chug of the motor sounded within fifty yards of the big dolphin he gave a blast of warning, and three long bodies shot gleaming through the clear water straight as a fish torpedo, which their propeller tails suggested, until a broad shoal was reached, over which, with fins and backs out of water, they scrambled with the fuss and fury of a

flock of frightened ducks, only stopping when a mile of channels and shoals separated us. Ten minutes later, as we again approached, they were rollicking in a school of silver mullet, filling the air with splashing water and spray as they tossed the little fish by scores many feet above the surface of the water and leaping upward caught them in the air as they fell.

They were too busy to see the launch until its bow was within thirty feet of them, when in wild panic they scattered in three directions. I rolled the wheel toward the biggest one and thereafter his trail was not dropped. Other dolphins came near but were ignored. The big bayonet fin of a tarpon, the two fins of a wandering shark cutting the water in the wake of his prey, or the three which followed the swaying four-foot weapon of a fourteen-foot sawfish, tempted us in vain as they crossed our path. When the creature looked toward us, whether from a distance of ten yards or a thousand, it was always our pursuing bow that he saw. From the moment the chase began the dolphin knew that he was the quarry, as the wild deer is sure when his own trail is struck. He dashed through channels and over shoals for a long distance in a straight line, while we plodded after him, farther behind each minute.

As the danger receded he rested from time to time, often changing his course and forgetting his fright until the approach of his pursuer, near and more persistent than ever, struck him with a panic that sent him flurrying around us for an hour in circles of varying diameter, but usually in one direction,

The Chase of the Dolphin

while we described lesser circles within his orbit, gaining with every yard, excepting as he reversed his direction when we presumed too much on his maintaining it. He swam between banks that were nearly dry, through channels so crooked that I strained the tiller ropes many times in each minute, while our boatmen, with oars at bow and stern, helped us around the sharp corners. The Camera-man at the motor, during the short turns, smothered the air to avoid stranding the boat, and when the course was clear changed the lead and varied the feed with microscopic care until the last possible foot was extracted from each minute. That our speed might be yet further increased, our excited boatmen invited trouble for themselves by dragging one of the skiffs we were towing up on the stern of the launch, while it was traveling at its highest speed. Three times it happened that we ran aground, only to get under way again within a minute. Once all hands went overboard to drag the boat a dozen yards through the mud, losing minutes during which the dolphin made his way to open water, with a depth of six or seven feet. Here the circling began again and for more than half an hour we chased him, until at times not more than the length of the boat separated us, and as he rose more frequently to blow, his explosive breaths sounded like great sobs.

Drawing up beside the launch the skiff we were towing, which contained a harpoon, pole and lines, I started out with my boatman to intercept the dolphin in one of his great circles. After anchoring the

launch and putting overboard the other skiff, the Camera-man followed with his photographic paraphernalia. When the chug-chugging of the motor stopped, the dolphin seemed to think the chase ended, became less wild, and swam so quietly, as for an hour he evaded us, that I looked forward to a tame surrender when he should at last feel the harpoon. Later, while using my harpoon pole to help the hot pursuit of the creature which was just ahead of us, he turned so quickly that before I could slip the harpoon on the pole he had passed me, striking the skiff contemptuously with his tail as he went by.

After another half hour of exertion that would have been most exhausting if it had been useful labor, I got another chance with the harpoon. This weapon was less savage than its name would imply. It was about three inches long, with a single barb so arranged as merely to penetrate the skin of the creature struck, and was not intended to disable him. When it touched the dolphin, however, it seemed to turn on an electrical current of much dynamic importance, and his first dash filled the air with splashing water that drenched me, tore my hands with the savage jerk on the harpoon, and persuaded me to sit down on the bottom of the skiff, hastily and with violence, when the line chanced to foul. As the dolphin swam swiftly under and around the skiff, striking it violently with his tail as he leaped beside it, I thought of another dolphin which had playfully jumped through and everlastingly wrecked the dingey, and quite shattered the nerves of a friend of mine.

The Chase of the Dolphin

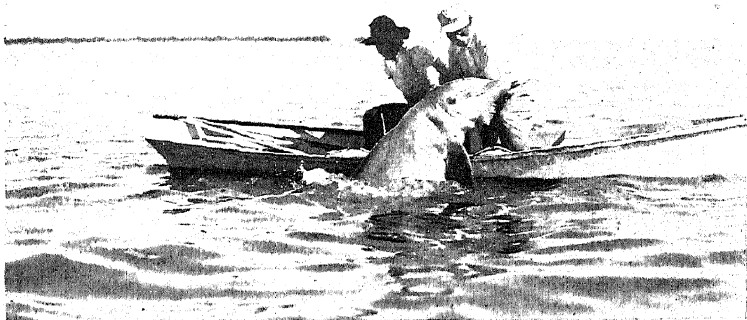
The outgoing line burned my hands. Then, as I began to get way on the skiff, instead of towing it and wearing himself out, in harmony with all recognized theories, the dolphin turned and swam back around and under the skiff many times, keeping me busy clearing up the line in which he was trying, with some success, to entangle me. After he had played me for an hour, during which he seemed to be growing as much stronger as I felt weaker, I persuaded the Camera-man that his plates contained all the pyrotechnics he required and that he had earned the privilege of playing the creature. We exchanged places and I rested for half an hour.

There were moments during his struggle with the dolphin when some especial activity of the latter encouraged me to look for the capsizing of the skiff, which often seemed imminent. When I returned to the skiff I handed the harpoon line to the boatman and tried to gaff the animal. On the first attempt the breaking of the handle of the gaff saved me from going overboard with it. After the second stroke I hung on to the gaff, although the boat was whirled around many times with a violence that half filled it with water and threatened every moment to capsize it. It was yet another hour before the creature was quiet enough to justify an effort to take him aboard. We tried this in many ways, dragging at his head, pulling on his tail, and endeavoring to roll him sideways over the gunwale. Often we nearly swamped the skiff and had to bail it many times, before, aided by the animal himself, we succeeded in

rolling him aboard. For the first time he then opened wide his mouth, causing me to retire to the extreme bow of the boat while he slapped my boatman with his powerful tail. Victory was ours. He was the captive of our spear—for the moment, which we utilized to measure his length of eight and a half feet and his girth of about five.

Then he became uneasy and lifting his tail laid it upon the port gunwale until water poured over that side. The boatman and I promptly sat on the starboard edge of the boat to trim it. The dolphin shifted his head to port with an emphasis that left us sitting in water that poured into the skiff. Like a flash his tail was in the air, falling with a violence that broke the stem of the boat as his weight rolled it bottom side up. The first dash of the fleeing animal, which was yet fast to the skiff, brought him against the other boat, nearly upsetting it, quite capsizing the boatman, and spilling the Camera-man among his tools, where he sat gnashing his teeth as he contemplated the heads of two swimmers, floating oars, line, tubs, pole, and an upturned skiff being towed rapidly away, while his unready camera held only plates that had already been exposed.

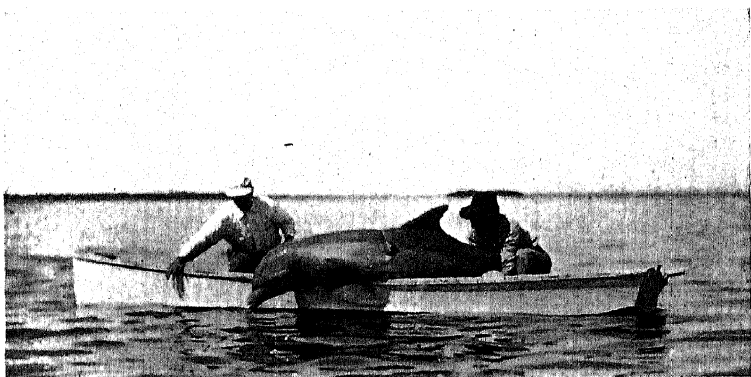
As the harpoon line was still fast to the dolphin and he was much exhausted I again got hold of him and tried to drag him on the bottom of the submerged skiff, with the result of again capsizing the already capsized craft. But the struggle was over. He was quiet as I rested in the water beside him, except that he sent occasional offensive blasts from



1



2



3

- (1) Trying to get him aboard head first. He is too heavy for that method. (2) Tail first is a better way of getting him into the boat. (3) Just landed and all in.

The Chase of the Dolphin

his lungs into my face. When we turned him loose he swam slowly away, seemingly not realizing that he was actually free.

If the sport of chasing dolphins requires justification, the best general defense is that of the small boy accused of the sin of fishing on Sunday:

“I didn’t ketch nothin’.”

Ninety-nine times in a hundred this plea is pertinent, since one may pursue dolphins for many moons before catching one. A hundred times I have seen sportsmen hunting them with harpoons, but never once with success. The flesh of the dolphin is of the color, consistency and nearly the taste of beef, but with enough of a fishy flavor to discredit it, although sometimes it is used for food.

Fishermen often shoot them because of their successful rivalry. Neither of these grounds may justify their serious pursuit, but the sportsman who has successfully chased a dolphin with a harpoon will tell you that the sport discounts any other form of excitement known to man; that, in the language of the bar, he doesn’t have to prove it, he admits it; and that anyhow it involves a smaller percentage of cruelty than any other recognized sport, from salmon fishing to football.

The dolphin of our story has suffered at the hand of the closest naturalist. He is really and truly a porpoise, whom some “scientific gent” who never saw him, has labeled *Delphinus delphis* and left without redress. His good name has been taken from him and given to a pig, the Snuffling Pig, or

Herring Hog, a little four-foot beast, ugly and oily, that cannot leap his length out of water. The dolphins of history and poetry have all been fish, since Arion addressed his preservers as "faithful, friendly fish," and poets praised and painted the p. p. c. color scheme of *Coryphæna hippuris*. Our porpoise is a splendid mammal, of as good red blood as the whale, seal or manatee.

He prefers the name of porpoise. He is accustomed to it, he uses it in his own family, and he is known by it to all who go down to the sea in ships, or, who, living on the coasts or rivers which he frequents, have seen him make picturesque the industry by which he gains his livelihood and provides thriftily for his little ones. He is the life of a coastwise cruise, in deep water popping up beside the boat continually, with a snort of surprise on each appearance, and often disappearing before the eye can be turned upon him. He becomes more prudent when the water is clear and his long body can be seen cleaving it beneath the surface, for sad experience has taught him that the Man-with-a-gun can then trace his course and time the instant of his rise to the surface, to his undoing. If all but the channel is shoal and water beside the boat too shallow for his protection, he precedes it as pilot and playfully signals the course by his gambols.

When he fishes in deep water, friendly flocks of gulls attend him and fatten upon the crumbs that fall from his table. Sociable pelicans, in their own ungainly fashion, tumble upon the water beside him,

The Chase of the Dolphin

finding prey in the fish he has frightened. When the tide is high he takes his family picnicking on shallow banks where they keep the air filled with the mullet they toss back and forth. As the tide falls, he lies craftily in an adjoining channel and knocks endwise the small fish as they come off the banks.

Like the fisherman, he is shy of the weapons of the catfish which he deftly catches just back of the head and bites in two before swallowing it. When other fish are scarce the heads of hundreds of "cats" with their vicious daggers attached, may be seen drifting with the tide in the waters where a family of porpoises have breakfasted.

He becomes less timid by night and greets one in startling fashion with a sudden blast beside the cabin window, or the shake-down on deck. On dark nights, he swims beside grassy banks where small fish have hidden in water too shallow to float him. Here at short intervals, with his powerful tail, which lies horizontally as he swims and is a mass of muscle of such tensile strength that sailors use its fibers for fiddle strings, he strikes blows, like those of a pile driver, which can be heard for miles. The splashing water flashes out light and the small fish leave wakes of phosphorescent fire that guide their pursuer to his supper. He is possessed of a restless activity that finds expression in playful leaps of many feet as he catches in his mouth the little fish which he has tossed high in air.

The porpoise (or dolphin) contributes little to the food or raiment requirements of the people, but he

adds to the gayety of nations, and is the only one of the great sea mammals available for study or entertainment. What are left of the whale family are protected by their environments from ordinary observation; the seal has been mostly manufactured into garments of fashion, and the shy manatee is too nearly extinct to be helpful.

Webster clears up the confusion of names by defining: "*Delphinus delphis*, true dolphin." "*Phocaena communis*, called dolphin by sailors," and "*Coryphæna hippuris*, commonly known as dolphin."

The last named is a fish of triangular construction, five feet in length, and a favorite of elegiac poets, who rank him with the swan, whose dying melody is not more impressive than the brilliancy of the changing hues of this fish as he makes his exit.

One well-known naturalist writes that porpoises are distinguished by their blunt noses and dolphins by long, pointed beaks, but that some dolphins have blunt noses and a few porpoises long snouts, so that it is impossible to lay down rules by which one may always be distinguished from the other. Every-day folks, who don't care for the dolphin of the ancient or the many varieties they never see, but would like to know the name of the creature they have watched from the deck of a ship or the pier of a hotel may conclude that if it is about seven feet in length, with small head, long and narrow beak, body built on the lines of a manatee or cucumber, with a jaunty tail set crossways, gray of back, dingy of belly, given to playful leaping and resembling its picture among

The Chase of the Dolphin

the illustrations herewith, it is *Delphinus delphis*, the dolphin. If it is less than five feet long, black, ungraceful as the pig it resembles, and too lazy to lift its head out of water when it sniffs for breath, it is the *Phocæna communis* of the naturalist.

MAKERS OF MOONSHINE

CHAPTER V

MAKERS OF MOONSHINE

THERE was a price on every head in the group before us, while Winchesters rested against convenient trees.

The Camera-man stood with me just within the entrance to a spherical glade in the swamp. It was thirty feet in diameter, between walls of closely growing trees and tangled vines; thirty feet from ground to dome of curving branches burdened with orchids and brilliant with their blossoms. Festoons of Spanish moss swayed with the column of air rising from a fire of fat pine which filled the cavernous opening with ruddy light and waving shadows.

The big iron kettle over the fire was fitted with a wooden top, deftly fashioned from a section of a cypress tree three feet in diameter, the stump of which served as a table within the glade. An iron pipe led from the cypress cover of the kettle through a wooden box of water, and from its projecting end poured a tiny stream of the potent product of the still.

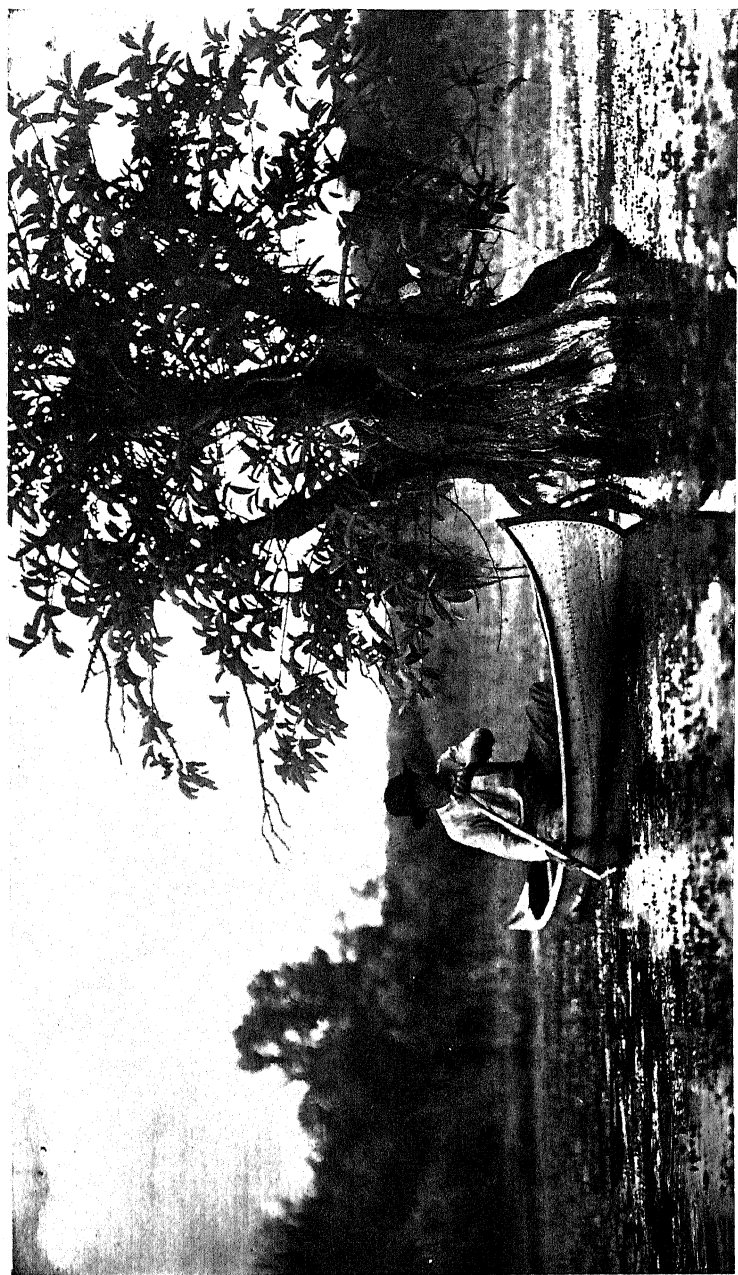
Half an hour earlier the hooting of an owl had told the group of the coming of our guide, but *we* were unexpected. There were no introductions and his, "It's all right, boys," didn't seem to make it "all

right," although every one knew that our being there under his guidance involved his pledge to stand for us, in the Indian sense of a hostage, with his life the forfeit. Some of the whispered colloquy which we overheard was unprintable and the tension was only relieved when it was understood that the boxes we carried contained camera and sensitive plates.

This audacity appealed to the sense of humor of the moonshiners and we were made parties to the conversation, which continued to be lurid in spots, and I was tendered a fiery potation, straight from the still, "just to round up the damn foolishness and copper-fasten the evidence," as a satirical member of the group, whose culture shone through his costume and his company, remarked.

It was all made pleasant for us after the first few strenuous minutes, when the moonshiners became satisfied that we would observe the flag of truce we carried, which bound us to make no use, that would imperil them, of what we learned.

They took a childlike interest in the arrangement for flash-light pictures, but were modestly careful to keep out of range of the camera. It required some persuasion to overcome this diffidence and more to keep the subject selected from too obviously posing for his picture. When he was requested to go to work naturally, just as if he was alone, he picked up his Winchester, tucked it under his arm, and proceeded to poke fat chunks of pine under the kettle. This bit of realism seemed to satisfy the artistic sense of the Camera-man, for he ceased to criticise.



Traversing a vast swamp. A custard apple tree in the foreground.

Our satirical friend observed to me that he didn't care to have his photograph taken by amateurs, but would send me a fine one by a New York artist with one of his new visiting cards as soon as they arrived from Tiffany's.

"How often do you require new visiting cards?" I inquired, lightly.

"People don't ask such questions in this country, unless they're looking for trouble," he replied, adding, "If you want to accumulate a lot of dangerous information you surely are on the right track."

I told him frankly just what information I was seeking and surprised an amused smile on his face when I suggested looking to him for it. I explained my acquaintance with his associate, whom I first met long before, in the wilderness bordering the Everglades, "out of grub" and whose needs of food, ammunition, and salt for his alligator hides, I had supplied, taking advantage of his gratitude to exact a promise that he would introduce me to a moonshiner's camp. Again I met him in a little settlement, where he had gone to see his young son, who prattled to me in his father's presence:

"Pap's awful careless. He left his gun in his canoe, and I'm afraid somebody'll get him. You know Pap's had trouble."

Only the day previous, while exploring in a canoe a bit of the Everglades and a little cypress swamp that bordered them, I met him for the third time and urged him to take the Camera-man and me at once, in his Indian canoe, to his camp in the swamp.

Since then, with a little help from us, he had poled his loaded canoe thirty miles, once stopping to add to its burden the weight of a buck, which he shot through grass so thick that only the tips of its antlers could be seen.

Sometimes the course lay along almost invisible trails, over a sea of meadow, dotted with islands of bay, white, black and sweet, myrtle and cocoa plums, marked by strands of cypress and an occasional group of palmettoes; across wide bands of the almost impassable saw-grass of the Everglades; through sloughs choked with grass and moss, and deep waterways so grown up with "bonnets" that one could almost walk upon the continuous carpet of their leaves; through acres of long cat-tail flags that rose high above our heads and shut out the air, while a noonday sun poured down upon our heads vertical rays that frizzled our brains, burned our eyes and sent the sweat streaming down our bodies.

From out of this Tophet we slid into the cool, dark recesses of a cypress swamp, along a creek, scarcely the width of the canoe, which was fairly choked with gar, mudfish and bass, that beat tattoos upon the canoe as they struggled past it. Moccasins slipped into the stream before us, or lifting their ugly heads from the logs on which they lay, let their forked tongues play before our faces as we passed. More than once I barely escaped laying a hand upon one as I helped push the canoe over the shoal places. Often the stream broadened to a pool of mud and water from which the heads of alligators would ap-



The cover, deftly fashioned from a huge cypress stump, converts the kettle into a retort.



A watchful eye is kept on the tiny trickle of the potent product.

MAKING MOONSHINE

pear in response to the grunting of our guide. Wary old 'gators would sink slowly back beneath the mud, but the youngsters sometimes replied vigorously, in grunts that could not be distinguished from the call of our guide.

We were traversing a vast swamp, abounding in rotting logs and dotted with cypress knees, from which rose trunks of live and water oaks, fringed with Spanish moss and covered with orchids, custard apples, bays and other trees, which shut out the sunlight with their dense foliage. Great vines, twisted like cables, stretched from the tops of the trees to the swamps beneath and occasional palmettoes struggled in the strangling clutch of octopus-like fig trees. Water turkeys, herons and ducks flew up from muddy pools and buzzards flapped lazy wings above our heads.

A powerful stench struck us, like a blow in the face, as we passed beneath the guano-whitened trees of a small bird rookery where the ground was covered with broken shells of the white, lightly spotted egg of the white ibis, the blue of the Louisiana heron, and the white, with blue areas, of the cormorant. Little heads at the end of snake-like necks were thrust over the edges of nests above us and from widely opened bills came distinct cries of, "Mamma Mamma!" while crows sat upon near-by trees ready to rob of its eggs the first unguarded nest. Among the disturbed mother birds that flew around us, there were but three with plumes. A single egret and only two long whites told the miserable story of the

raking of the wilderness with a fine comb, to satisfy the demands of fashion and vanity.

There were tracks in the oozy earth which our guide named as we passed, much as one would read the signs on the streets of a city. Wildcat, coon, otter, possum, panther, and bear with one cub, were among those pointed out.

As darkness came on and eyes were useless, imagination became active and peopled this underworld with forms that fitted its gloom and mystery. What seemed the distant barking of a dog resolved itself into the hooting of an owl, and thereafter the calls and answers of these creatures of the night were continuous.

"Hoo! hoo! hoo-hoo!" coming from behind me in the canoe was followed by the voice of our host:

"That's to let 'em know we're comin'. It's some safer."

As the canoe stopped beside a log, I clung to the branch of a tree while feeling for a place for my feet, and soon, with a plate box swung from my shoulder, was stumbling through the darkness, clinging to the pack which the moonshiner carried on his back with one hand and holding the other uplifted to guard my eyes from the bushes that brushed my face.

The Camera-man followed with the camera which he would trust in no other hands. The moon was full, but few of its rays reached us throughout that interminable tramp, during which I never knew when my foot was lifted, whether it was to strike against a root, or snag, or sink into a slimy hole.



Frequent tests of the finished article seemed necessary.



Suspicious of strangers, the moonshiners are always prepared for emergencies.

MAKING MOONSHINE

Once the squirming of a fat frog beneath the sole of my canvas shoe became, in fancy, the writhing of a venomous snake that puckered my scalp and made goose flesh of my skin.

Often I stumbled, twice I fell, arms were bruised, face scratched and shins macerated, when with eyes blinking in the blaze I first looked upon faces that shone sinister in the light of the fire beneath the still.

After the excitement of the flash lights, when the men had crawled into their near-by lairs, perhaps to rage and regret the folly of their complaisance, I sat with my back against the big cypress stump and listened to my cynical new acquaintance as he fed the fire and, as he said, "talked like a fool because a man *must* speak and hear his own language sometimes, or else go dotty."

He told me the name that he kept from his companions, and laughed aloud at my start of recognition. In a conversational orgy of some hours, religious, philosophical, political and social, I felt that I was acting as a safety valve to a dangerously repressed intellectual nature. He discoursed with dispassion upon ethics and enactments which had circumscribed his own sphere of action and playfully played that in the great future, the elect, who through the tariff had collected wealth from poverty, whose wives smuggled diamonds and whose daughters wore aigrettes, would look down with compassion on the condemned poor who shot the plumed birds, or ventured, in their hovels in the wilderness, to boil the product of their toil in closed vessels.

I inquired about his companions and was told that one of them, an Indian, was merely a customer, who came to trade because, as he said:

“Think so you make better *whyome* (whiskey) than Miami mans.”

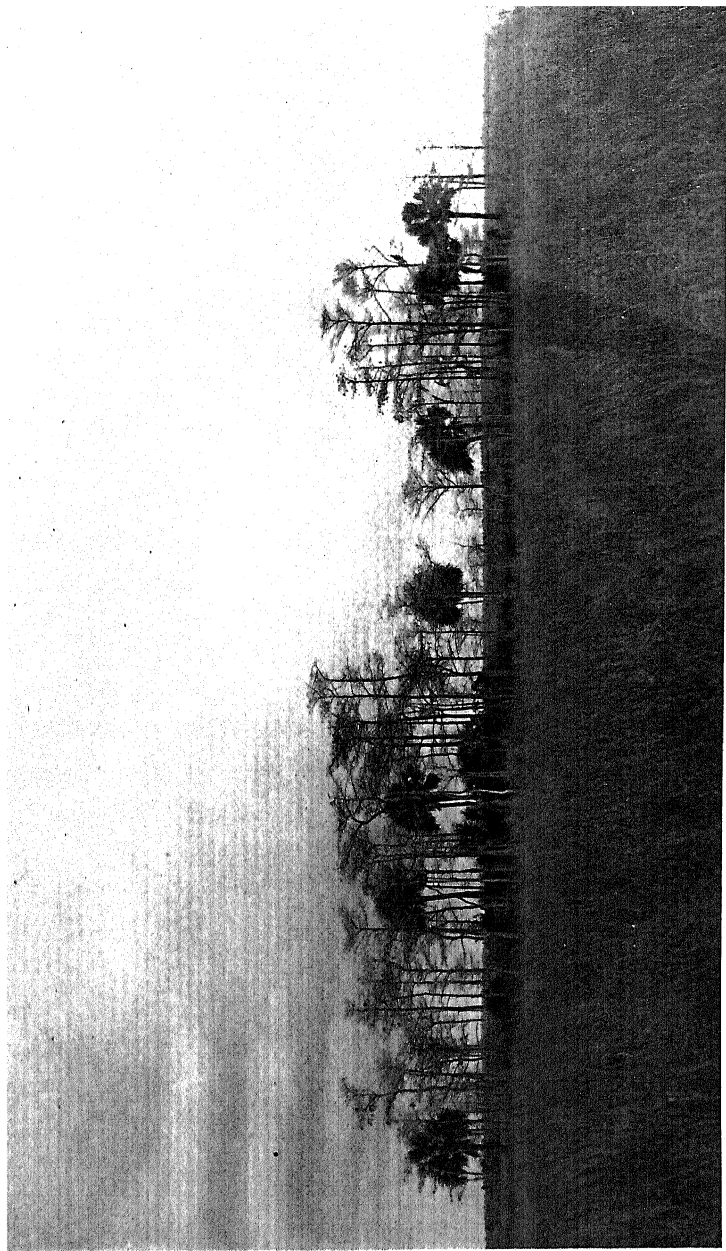
The two others were murderers. One had cleaned out his wife’s family, killing two of them at the courthouse door. The other had killed two men, been sent to the chain gang and after serving two years had escaped.

“You don’t seem to regard human life very highly down here,” I suggested.

“We value it at all it is worth in the swamp. Some of these refugees would give themselves up, if they could be sure of decent treatment. Any of them would be more likely to surrender to a United States marshal than to kill him, and some would stand trial for murder rather than shoot a sheriff, but if any of them were wanted for the chain gang it would be the officer’s life or theirs.

“That man had no business to bring you here, but he’s a grateful beggar who isn’t used to decent treatment and he thought that was the only way he could get square with you. You could trust your life with him, but there are others around here who wouldn’t let your existence stand between them and a dollar. There’s that fellow who just ran away with his partner’s wife, for example, but nobody need worry about him—after his friend finds him.

“I know, of course, that you won’t give us away, but you’ve broken up the business here and to-



Streaked with strands of cypress.

Makers of Moonshine

morrow the still will have to be moved. We will all be scared as rabbits, when we wake up in the morning and think of what has happened. You arranged to leave at daylight. Better anticipate it a bit."

But we did not leave at daylight. Our host said that he had brought us there and by —— we were going to stay as long as we pleased and take as many damn pictures as we wanted to.

And we did.

THE FLORIDA CROCODILE

CHAPTER VI

THE FLORIDA CROCODILE

ALL hands on deck, quick!" Even as I shouted, they all tumbled up, the Camera-man in his pajamas and the two boys in whatever they had on.

We were anchored beside the Madeira Hammock, at the extreme southerly end of the peninsula of Florida. A few days before, we had captured two crocodiles which I had arranged to start on their way to the Bronx the next morning. In preparation for the trip we had tied one in the bottom of the big skiff and the other, in a box ten feet by three, had been placed on top of the skiff. I had intended to tow the outfit to Planter, with the little launch, whence the reptiles could be shipped to Key West to connect with a steamer for New York. In the night there was a great commotion beside our boat, followed by much splashing, and when I rushed on deck, I found the big skiff swamped and both crocodiles struggling in the water, one tied in the capsized craft, the other navigating in a submerged box, and both headed straight for Davy Jones.

The night was one of the darkest I ever knew and I sat on the rail, with my legs overboard, clinging to a corner of the big box, trying to keep one end

enough out of water to enable the crocodile to breathe. I was not quite certain whether it was the head or tail of the creature that I was keeping on top, although I suspected it was the latter, from the way it was splashing water over me. The boys soon got a line around the box and with the peak halyards hoisted enough of it out of water to ensure its occupant a supply of air. In the meantime the Camera-man held up the bow of the skiff, to keep the nose of the other crocodile out of water, and thereafter we rigged tackle to hoist box and skiff, with their contents, on deck.

It was morning when we finished the job and as I had changed my mind about towing, with a small launch, a skiff containing such unruly reptiles, we set sail in our cruising boat for Key West, where our captives held a reception on the dock of the Mallory Line which was attended by a large proportion of the inhabitants of that city.

Many years ago I thought that I was the original discoverer of the Florida crocodile, but found afterward so many other original discoverers that the honor wasn't big enough to go around. I learned later that the first and finest specimen ever killed was by Dr. W. T. Hornaday in 1875.

My first sight of one was when anchored in a cruising boat about a mile south of Madeira Hammock. The captain and I put out in a skiff to look for an alligator whose head had shown for an instant two hundred yards from the boat. Poling quickly to the place where we had seen him, we easily followed



The crocodile on his slide taking a sun-bath.

his trail by the roiled water. The water in the bay was of a uniform depth of four feet and happened to be unusually clear so that we soon caught sight of the reptile and thereafter it was merely a struggle to tire him down until we could get within harpooning distance. We drove the skiff with all our strength and made short cuts whenever possible. We soon discovered that it was no ordinary alligator we were following. He was more agile, his speed greater, and once we saw his pointed, knobbed nose, so different from that of the alligator which we knew so well. After an hour of exhausting effort I got a chance with the harpoon and sent the iron against his scaly back. It failed to penetrate the tough hide, but started the creature off like an express train, and we did not see him again, nor had we strength left to follow him if we had found him.

The next day we started out with the boy and Tom, the boatman, in one skiff and the captain and I in another. We rowed, sculled and poled for miles, up narrow creeks where dense vegetation compelled us to lie down in the skiffs, as we dragged them under overhanging branches, out into bayous and broad, open ponds.

In the afternoon, tired and discouraged, we were poling through a long narrow passage, between wooded banks, which connected two shallow lakes. Suddenly the whole bottom of the stream seemed to have life, and I saw under me the tail of a monster, as his body glided beneath the skiff. There was no vulnerable part within reach and no time to strike.

We turned the skiff quickly and pursued the crocodile which was heading for the boy's boat. He drove a harpoon into the body of the reptile and his boat was towed rapidly behind the great creature until his harpoon pulled out. We poled past his skiff and were soon within striking distance of the saurian, which I hit in the side with my harpoon. He towed us at high speed to about the middle of the stream where it broadened out and where there was a deep hole. As he stopped here for a moment, we passed him and I called to the boy to guard his end of the channel, resolving never to allow the reptile to leave that creek alive.

I was fearful that the one iron might draw out and decided to put no more strain upon it, but to use it only to keep track of the creature and to make fast another harpoon as soon as possible.

We pushed carefully over the hole where we knew he was hidden and peered under and through the overhanging bushes. At length I saw him directly under me and sent a Lily iron with such force against his broad back that the iron bent up into the form of a ring. The crocodile tore down the creek like a tempest and was met by a keen whale iron from the hand of the boy. Back he rushed, to receive another harpoon from me which only served to turn him around. Again he was checked by the other skiff, this time by a harpoon thrown by Tom, which broke on one of the creature's scales. The crocodile again took refuge in the deep hole and we rested.

I remembered that on the day previous, the cap-



Coming out of his cave.

tain had laughed when I failed to drive a harpoon through the hide of a crocodile and I invited him to take a shot at this particular saurian, which was now at rest and could be distinctly seen. The captain smiled as he straightened up his tall form and put forth his great strength, and it seemed to me that iron and pole were both going clear through the reptile. Yet when the harpoon rebounded and the crocodile dashed down the channel, I was quite as well pleased as if the throw had been successful. Back, unhurt, from the boy's boat again came the creature and received another iron from ours. Once more he swam to the other skiff and back. This time, unmindful of a blow from my harpoon, he swam past us and made for the end of the creek and the open bay beyond it. Just as he reached this I planted in his body a harpoon that held. I now felt sure of the quarry and shouted for the boy to come.

His skiff came flying down the stream, Tom with his hat gone and both poling like mad, for fear of losing some of the fun. As they reached the reptile the boy again struck him, but the patience of the crocodile had been quite worn out.

Rising to the surface and opening his great mouth to its fullest extent, the monster dashed upon the skiff and took the side of the boat between his huge jaws. The breaking out of a piece of the gunwale caused his upper jaw to slip and saved the skiff from instant destruction. I attacked the reptile with a harpoon and he turned upon our skiff with open mouth, and as I repelled him with my harpoon pole

he bit it in three pieces. Tom pulled for the bushes and announced that he had had enough, nor could he be induced to come out.

We took the boy in our skiff and tried to get a noose over the head of the crocodile. We worried the monster into attacking us and then kept him off with oars while we tried to throw a rope over his head. This occupation began to seem extra-hazardous and when the captain suggested that the contract was too big for us, I agreed with him. I had hoped to ship the crocodile alive to Central Park as a companion to a bear which I had recently sent there, but concluded to compromise on a mounted specimen for a museum I wotted of.

After shooting him the transportation problem presented itself, for we were many miles from our cruising boat, where we had to carry him to properly prepare the hide for mounting. We tore the seats out of one of the skiffs, sunk it in the water, dragged the body of the reptile over it and stood in water up to our necks and lifted while the boy sat on the crocodile and bailed. Then all hands got in the boy's skiff, which had been seriously injured by the crocodile, and paddling and poling, as we towed the boat which carried him, we reached our cruising boat late in the night. The reptile was fourteen feet two inches long and we had struck him seventeen times with harpoons.

We spent many days exploring the water-ways lying between Barnes Sound and the Everglades, finding no alligators but many crocodiles. We followed the



Taking the crocodile into the skiff.



Caught in a turtle net.

The Florida Crocodile

trail left by their dragging tails in shallow waters and traced their course by the roiled water of the deeper channels. Sometimes we caught sight of their heads on the surface of a lake and occasionally traced them through the odor of musk which they gave out.

The Florida crocodile is nearly extinct. The few left, excepting those in captivity, are probably confined to a narrow strip of the extreme southern end of the Florida peninsula. The crocodile is active in defending himself when attacked, but when seized and his jaws tied, becomes as gentle as a lamb. I have often captured specimens nine or ten feet long, and after tying their jaws together with a handkerchief and taking them into the skiff, have sat upon their backs for hours while I hunted for their mates. Whenever I have tried this experiment on an alligator I have had to swim. The crocodile usually runs some distance when disturbed, but the alligator is given to hiding in the mud and playing possum.

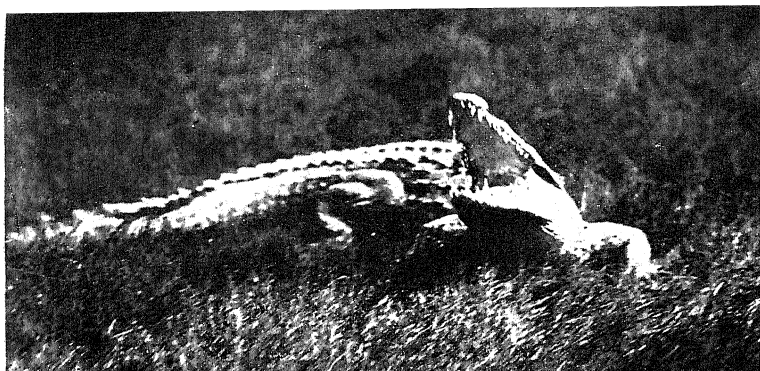
In the old days my excuse for killing crocodiles was that museums and colleges desired mounted specimens of the creatures. While I have continued to pursue them, partly for the excitement of the chase, and seek to capture them alive for the camera, or for some great public educational institution like the New York Zoo, I no longer kill them, excepting by accident, of which mischances we have had several.

On one occasion we followed in a skiff a little creek running into the Madeira Hammock, which was so overgrown and closed overhead by interlocking branches and intertwined vines that we had to clear a

path with hatchet and knife. It seemed to have escaped observation, for it showed no trace of previous hunter or explorer and it ended in a small landlocked bay to which it was the only outlet. As we entered the bay a slight odor of musk told us that one of the reptiles was near, while a splash at the other end of the bay spoke of another which had just slid from his bed into the water.

We spent some hours vainly trying to locate the creatures and then, believing they would leave the bay where they had been alarmed, we stretched a net across the creek by which we had entered, and went back to our cruising boat, which was a mile off shore, to get food and other comforts while we watched the net, during the siege we proposed. As we reached the boat a storm burst upon us, one skiff was carried away and by the time we had recovered it, the gale was so fierce that it seemed unwise to leave the big boat. Some hours later, when a slight abatement of the storm made it practicable to handle the skiff, we returned to our net to find in it two crocodiles, one of nearly eleven feet and the other of nine feet in length, both of them dead. In the little time of our absence they had drowned.

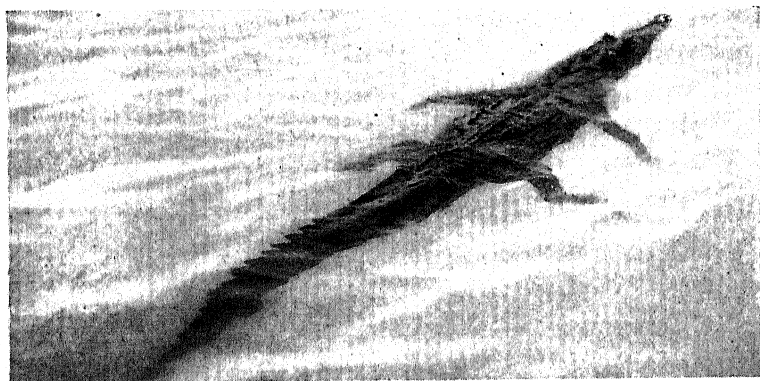
The next time we set the net we didn't take our eyes off of it, and when some of the corks began to bob under the surface started for it and before the crocodile knew that he was in trouble we had him tightly wound up in the net and aboard the skiff. We had one or two little scrimmages with him while unwrapping him, getting a line around his body and



1



2



3

(1) Jumping at the camera-man. (2) Awkward navigation.
(3) Homeward bound.

The Florida Crocodile

chucking him overboard to look after himself until he was wanted.

Some days later we took him to a high and dry key where he posed for the Camera-man, and then, as he was less than nine feet long and not eligible for the Zoo, we walked beside him to the bank down which he slid gracefully into the water, the Camera-man taking a final shot at him as he started on his homeward voyage.

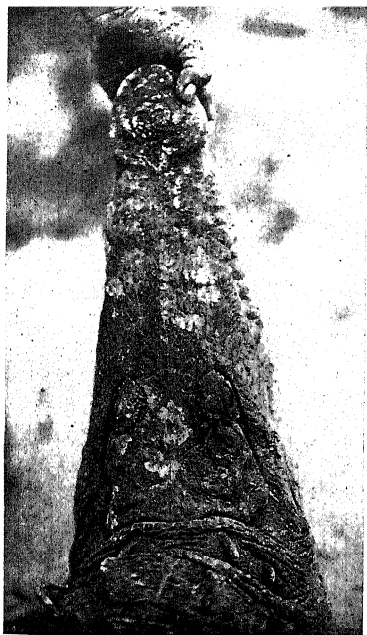
We caught a baby crocodile about five feet long which, by the time we were through photographing him, had become quite a pet, and our hunter-boy wanted to take him home to show to his friends in Everglade. We permitted this with the understanding that we would bring him back to his own country on our next visit. We gave the creature the freedom of the deck, with only a string to his leg to fetch him back when he slipped overboard. He was a well-mannered infant, but I often wondered that he didn't bite off a few of the toes of the barefoot boy that stood beside him and tried to make him eat things that he didn't want.

The boy did make him eat the food he offered him, for he took the baby in his arms, held open his jaws and put oysters, clams and pieces of fish down his throat and then held his mouth closed until he swallowed them. One night the mercury ran way down in the thermometer and in the morning the little crocodile was stiff with the cold. His nurse rubbed him, massaged him and gave him a warm bath, but the baby died and the hunter-boy grieved for days.

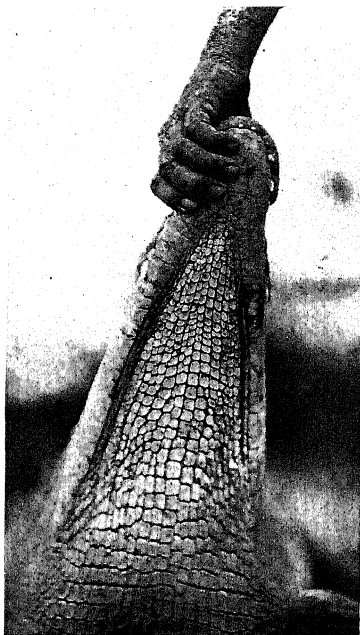
While exploring in a skiff the system of shallow bays that lie to the east of Cape Sable, hoping to find a channel leading through to White Water Bay on the west coast, the hunter-boy landed for a tramp of a few miles through the woods to the north. I remained with the skiff on the shore of a large bay, and carefully studied its surface through a field glass. Several times the head of a large crocodile appeared, about five hundred yards out in the bay and directly in line with a tall palmetto on the opposite shore. When the hunter-boy returned I stood in the bow of my skiff with my harpoon, while he poled it toward the palmetto.

As we neared the place where the crocodile had appeared our motion was scarcely perceptible, until at last I saw beneath my hand the creature we sought. I thrust the point of the harpoon through the skin of his foreleg and after the crocodile had towed us half a mile he came up beside the skiff with jaws wide open. It was the work of a few minutes only to tie them together, pull out the harpoon and drag him over the gunwale, although we nearly swamped the skiff in doing it.

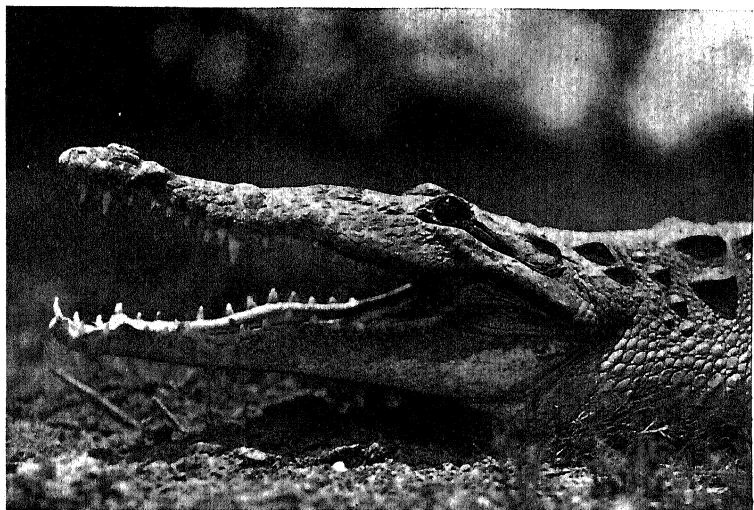
While the crocodile is more shy he is less savage than the alligator. After the Camera-man had spent an hour with one which we had turned loose upon an open prairie, the reptile was almost friendly. If he failed to "look pleasant" for the Camera-man our hunter-boy, although only about half his length, seldom hesitated to walk up to him and hold his jaws wide open. His advance upon an alligator was



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THE HEAD OF THE CROCODILE

- (1) Top view showing the lower teeth projecting through upper jaw. (2) Lower jaw and throat. (3) Head in action (camera within four feet).

The Florida Crocodile

more cautious and he wanted the protection of a big stick.

In hunting crocodiles you can take your best girl along. There is plenty of excitement, but nothing to really alarm her. She soon learns to recognize the signs of the reptile's presence and her eye is often quick to discern the disappearing black speck in the distance that serves to locate him. It is not always wise to take him too suddenly into the skiff with her unless her experience with mice has been exceptional.

To photograph the uncaptured crocodile in his native haunts requires patience, patience, and more patience. You must seal up your guns, locate yourself near his residence, and if your ways are gentle and you have the wisdom of the serpent, you may convince him that you also possess the harmlessness of the dove. On your first approach to his home he will glide from his bed on the bank to the bottom of the channel at the first sound of your distant paddle. Then day by day he will grow careless, until some bright noon you will catch him asleep on his bed or get a snapshot with your camera at his head as he slowly sinks back into his cave.

The best way to capture crocodiles unharmed is in their caves. On one occasion we found the trail of a large crocodile leading to a hole in a bank at the border of Barnes Sound. I held a noosed rope over the entrance to the cave while the Camera-man explored it with a long and flexible pole. He worried the reptile until a head appeared, with widely-opened jaws, over which I promptly cast the noose

and we dragged the creature out and turned him loose upon a prairie to be photographed.

We then tied him with a long line to a tree, giving him freedom of land and water until he should be wanted for the Bronx, but he proved to be an ingrate who wound his restraining line about a convenient snag, broke it and decamped.

In another case, when we had traced a crocodile to his cave, we hung a net before it and probed the ground behind it with sharpened sticks until it came out. This specimen was too active for us and had fairly escaped when one of our boys grabbed him by the nose and held his jaws closed until they could be tied. This is a dangerous thing to do with a crocodile, because his upper canine teeth, unlike those of the alligator, project past or through the upper jaw and tear the hand of the careless hunter.

The failure of this crocodile to make good his escape was the turning point in his career, the tide "which taken at its flood leads on to fortune," for it resulted in his transfer from ignoble associations and a climate that had proved deadly to his race, to the aristocratic atmosphere of the Bronx.

SALT-WATER FLY-FISHING

CHAPTER VII

SALT-WATER FLY-FISHING

IT is a cardinal principle with the angler that a fish must be buncoed. If you keep faith with him, by delivering a real fly instead of a counterfeit, you are disgraced. You are quite on the level of the lad with the bare feet, who sits on a log by the stream with a pole, a string and a can full of bait and yanks in the fish that had scorned the orthodox flies you so skillfully tendered them.

Fly-fishing had linked itself with the mountain torrents, swift rivers and rock-bound lakes of mine own North Country by ties so sacred that it seemed immoral to attempt it in the bays, rivers and passes of the South. Before I could really essay it I had to retire to my room and read aloud the Declaration of Independence. I rejoice now in my victory over superstition, for I find myself a missionary in a benighted land.

Such ignorance among fish I never before encountered. I tried them with a split bamboo rod, an expensive reel and a cleverly constructed fly. I had tied bits of bright worsted on the line to mark distances for the Camera-man, who was keeping in focus for possible jumps. The fish ignored the fly but ate up the worsted and sections of the line with

it. Then I tried old flies that had been chewed by salmon and eaten by moths, and found the fish rather prejudiced in their favor. In general, if they got the colors they wanted, the form in which they came was immaterial. Sometimes I tried the light silver-and-vermilion casting spoons of the shops, with indifferent success. The lure that was irresistible, which channel bass, cavallies, Spanish mackerel, ladyfish and a dozen others varieties seized with avidity, was a bit of bright tin about two inches long by a third of an inch wide, roughly cut to something like the shape of a fish. Then with a tiny swivel in the mouth, a hook in the tail and a slight twist to give the thing a wiggly motion, it becomes a great and successful deluder of the fish. Yet there are times when nothing will secure his attention. Dangle your fly before him, trail it on both sides and drag it over his back. If it hits him he will knock it in the air with his tail and close one eye gently as he turns slowly away. Then you lay down your rod and walk along the beach till you find a sand crab scooting for his hole. Catch him before he gets there, or if you fail, put your finger in the hole, wait until he takes hold of it with his biggest claw, and pull him out. That's the way I did the first time, but since then I've let my boatman catch the crabs. Then borrow a plain hook from some fisherman who isn't an angler and catch the fish that derided you.

In such an emergency all anglers fall from grace; the worm will turn. I once knew the dean of anglers in this country to tie a mouse to a hook and let him



From the beach at Gasparilla Pass we used the fly-rods.



In proportion to size the lady-fish will discount any other fish in existence for pyrotechnics.

swim across a pool past the lair of a big trout who feared not God nor regarded man.

Of course any fisherman on the coast will tell the angler the best time and place to catch fish, only no two of them will agree, and when one finds out for himself he will have to learn over again the next day. My latest theory is that the best time to catch fish is when they bite, but that view is subject to change.

The passes leading to the harbors of the west coast of Florida are popular with fish of many species. Instead of wading in ice-cold streams you walk out in the warm surf and cast among the breakers, or stroll inside the pass, on the shore of the bay. In quiet water choose from the gliding forms the biggest channel bass and coax, tempt and badger him with a fly, thrown before, behind, all around and straight at him, until you rouse him to languid attention, growing interest, earnest desire and furious determination. This will end in a wild rush for the fly whenever and wherever it touches the water, and your fish is hooked. You must mind your eye as the rod bends double; it isn't a brook trout or a black bass that you have on your line, but a powerful creature that may wear you out before you land him.

Your line is steadily running seaward and your patience with it, but nothing can be done beyond keeping all the strain you dare on the rod. Perhaps when two hundred and fifty feet of line are out and only fifty left, just when you are losing hope, the fish turns and makes for the shore. Then you must run up the beach like a scared rabbit, wind in line as

fast as you get a chance, letting it out only when you must. Always supplement the action of your rod with your legs and if, in an hour, or two, or three, the fish gives out first, you can decide in accordance with commissariat requirements whether your fifteen- or twenty-pound captive is to be netted or released on parole.

Sometimes a school of mackerel swims past, tossing the water into little cascades as they break up an assemblage of minnows and devour them in detail, and you toss any old fly you have among them, assured that three or four will jump at it at once and you will have broiled Spanish mackerel for supper—provided, however, that their sharp teeth don't sever your line. If a two-pound ladyfish, sometimes appositely called skipjack, strikes, you will have attained the *Ultima Thule* of fishing with a fly-rod and light tackle. No other fish jumps so quickly, so often, nor so high in proportion to his size, nor does any other make so brilliant a defense. Compared with it even the tarpon is sluggish, and trout, bass and salmon little livelier than mud puppies. Your reel will buzz an octave higher than you ever heard it, and your fingers will be blistered wherever they touched the line, while playing this splendid fighter who so richly earns the liberty you will surely restore it at the close of the performance. It is quite too bony for your alimentary canal and has already fed your mind, heart and muscle.

Now cast your line far out to where that tarpon rolled. Perhaps he will take the fly, and then you

will barter fly and line for one beautiful leap, the sight of which will be well worth all it costs, for your reel holds less line than will be called for by the rush of the Silver King.

No use to cast for that flying beauty with the big wings and a back spotted like a leopard. He is a whip-ray and lives on mollusks whose shells his quartz-crusher jaws pulverize without effort.

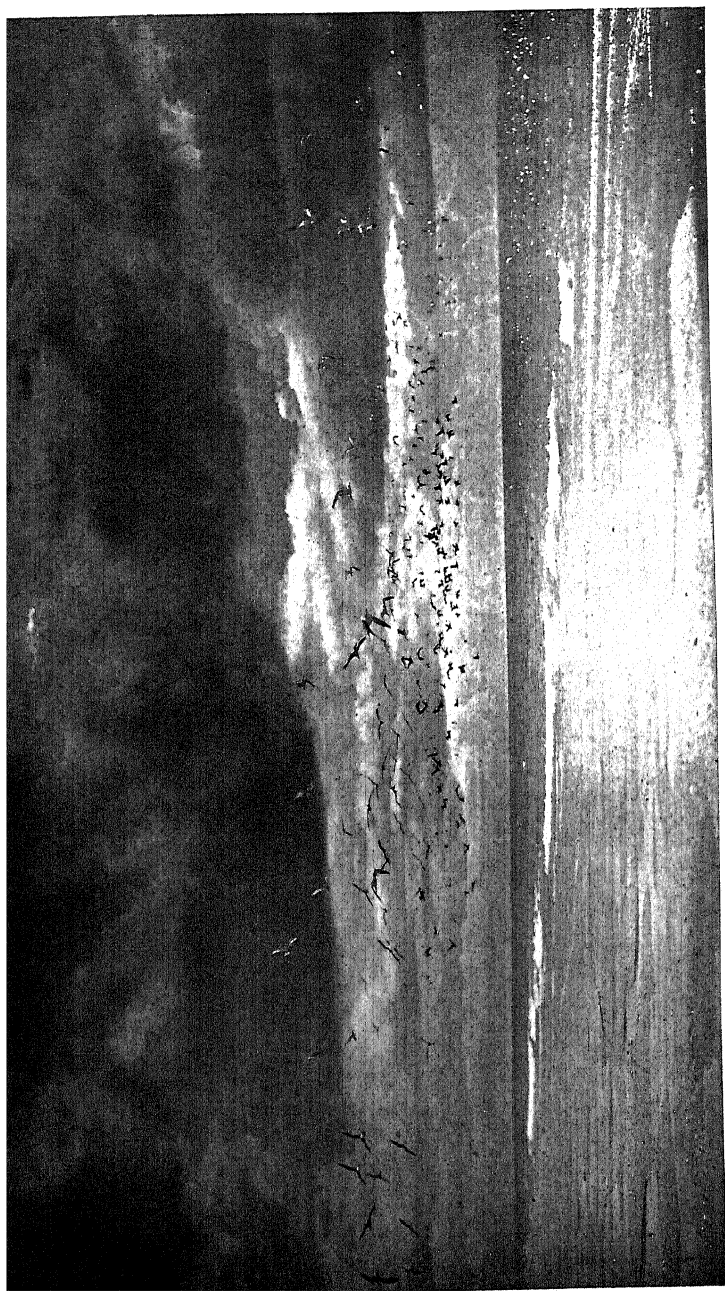
That ugly fish with the big fin and the cruel mouth would never find it out if you chanced to hook him. He is called the tiger of the seas, but is really a low-down, cowardly brute.

The great splashing around that bunch of little fish is made by cavallies. One of them will take your hook with anything you choose to put on it and you will get it back with the fish, after strenuous effort that may consume hours. From the back of the cavally, at the base of the dorsal fin, you may cut the curious "lucky bone" and insure your own good fortune, at the cost of his, while from the flesh of this dark-meated fish you may cut steaks that will remind you of tender beef.

Sometimes I take a light Canadian canoe and with my boatman paddle out through the pass to fish in the surf, hoping thus to keep dry. It doesn't always work that way. The boatman has learned to sit low in the canoe and exert himself mightily to keep it at right angles to breaking waves, and I have been taught to choose weather that is fair for tempting the surf with so frolicsome a craft. When a wave really catches a canoe broadside on, however, and

breaks over it, it bumps it heavily on the sand, rolls it over, with its passengers inside, and fills both full of sand in a negligible fraction of a second.

Most fish on the Florida coast will rise to a fly. I have taken from one to a dozen varieties at every pass between Cedar Keys and Cape Sable. Some can be caught at any season, but number and variety are greatest late in the spring. Yet all are subject to moods, the secret of which I have not fathomed. At times they require more coaxing than a balky horse, at others you can't keep them away with a club. There are mackerel days, sea-trout days and ladies' days. On one of the latter, at Little Gasparilla Pass, my score was two channel bass, four cavallics, one sea trout and thirty-nine ladyfish. The mackerel were kept for the table and the rest turned loose as they were caught. On the following day at the same place not a fish could be coaxed to rise. I have seen Mr. Herbert Johnston and the late Doctor Trowbridge catch five- to eight-pound channel bass by the light of the moon at Sarasota Pass. In the bay of the same name the latter captured from his light canoe, handled by himself, a twenty-two pound channel bass and a sixteen-pound cavally, all on light fly-rods. The late Doctor Ferber, dean of fly fishermen on the Florida coast, coaxed to his rod every species of fish to be found in the Homosassa River, from the so-called fresh water trout, or big-mouthed black bass, down to the worthless gar and tiny needle-fish. His record as a fisherman was handicapped by his conscience, for he habitually carried a tape



Pelicans and gulls flew up before us, and posed in picturesque fashion.

measure and a spring balance which he religiously used before he spoke.

Tarpon of all sizes will rise to a fly when they have been sufficiently tantalized. Big ones six feet and upwards in length can be found in passes, deep channels and broad bays near the coast, but can rarely be landed because the hard mouth of the fish strands the light line before he can be captured. Baby tarpon of eighteen inches and upward abound in small tributaries to the large rivers and the countless little inland ponds of mud and water. Often these will rise freely, but their mouths are so hard they are hooked with difficulty. The rare event of their capture leaves a delicious tingle in the memory. If they do not respond promptly to your cast, trying to fool them with that lure is a waste of time. "If they will, they will, you may depend on't. And if they won't, they won't, and there's the end on't." Try another brand of fly, and another, and another until you have bullied them into a passion.

Spanish mackerel are found in the currents of the passes and the rivers and, especially when traveling in schools, are ravenous, bite greedily and investigate afterward, which is good for the fisherman.

The sea trout likes the neighborhood of oysters and coral reefs, and affects quiet water and snags, but cannot resist a bright-colored fly. A three-pound specimen will fill an angler to the brim with joy. The swimming-bladders of these fish are large and gelatinous and when cooked can discount the famous New England dish of cods' sounds.

Ladyfish, or skipjacks, keep where the water is swiftest and if it is their hour for feeding will often meet the fly before it touches the water. Mangrove snappers collect under wooded banks in deep water and hide in hollow sunken logs, but when the spirit moves show greediness in their dash for the fly.

The cavally may be traced by the trouble he makes in schools of smaller fish and is then pretty sure to take anything in the likeness of a fly that is cast within his reach.

The sluggish sheepshead rarely comes out from under his old wreck unless something more seductive than a bunch of feathers is tendered him, yet he has occasionally been taken on a fly.

Mullet can be taken on a fly-rod only by snagging them, after which they display a spirit worthy of a game-fish. At Little Sarasota Pass, where a school of mullet with their little sucker mouths lifted to the surface of the water were absorbing some floating scum, I caught eleven of them by casting flies at their mouths until the hooks caught in their lips.

Bluefish are commonly found just outside the passes. They are usually small and fall easy victims to a satisfactory fly.

Ravallia lurk in the shadow of the grass in shallow bays and streams. They take the fly well and are strong fighters.

Shark and jewfish can only be reached by the fly through an intermediary. In Estero Bay a small red shark swallowed a cavally that I was playing and

then gave me an acrobatic exhibition by leaping like a tarpon several feet out of the water many times.

The ladyfish and tarpon always jump out of the water while being played; the kingfish usually jumps as he strikes, but not afterward; the Spanish mackerel rarely leaps above the surface. Excepting a few unimportant small fish, I remember no other fly-taking acrobats among the many gamy fish of the coast.

The fly-rod for salt-water fishing should weigh at least eight ounces and be very stiff. A multiplying reel, carrying one hundred yards of heavy line, is not too large. Many of the fish could be captured with a four-ounce rod, but the process would be a dreary one, lacking the excitement of a well-proportioned contest. The latter would require the more powerful weapon.

Poetic friends have deplored my fancied loss of sentiment for the brooks and the mountains, as if appreciation of the beauty of the one and the grandeur of the other could be lessened because for a time I revel in the quiet beauty of the open sea and take present delight in a broader horizon and the changing glory of storm and clouds.

On a certain day, which, as I learned later, was the one following the great cyclone that swept the Gulf coast and devastated Mobile and Pensacola, the beach at Gasparilla Pass was alternately dazzling in the sun, and dark in the shadow of the blackest of clouds. As I walked along the beach flocks of hundreds of gulls and white and brown pelicans rose

and flew around me, seemingly stopping to pose when the background of clouds was most effective. Atmospheric brilliancy went to the brain of the Camera-man and in his craze for "human interest" in his pictures, he interfered with my fishing by embarrassing requests. "A few feet farther forward, please," and I stepped off a bank up to my waist in water, and as the next roller lifted me from my feet I inquired if there existed any artistic objection to my swimming occasionally, if the water got above my nose.

The clouds over the Gulf grew thicker, darker and massed themselves into a black, whirling column that promised a coming waterspout, when through haste in changing holders, a plate broke loose inside the camera, choking its machinery, to the despair of the Camera-man who had watched many days for the effect he was now losing, with a dozen fresh plates in his hands all aching to be exposed. He sat down in the wet sand and worked nervously until a solid wall of approaching rain threatened to flood his camera and drown him. As we fled to the shelter of our cruising boat he expressed himself in language which, although perhaps adequate to the occasion, seemed to me unbecoming in an artist and a fisherman.

**THE PASSING OF THE FLORIDA
ALLIGATOR**

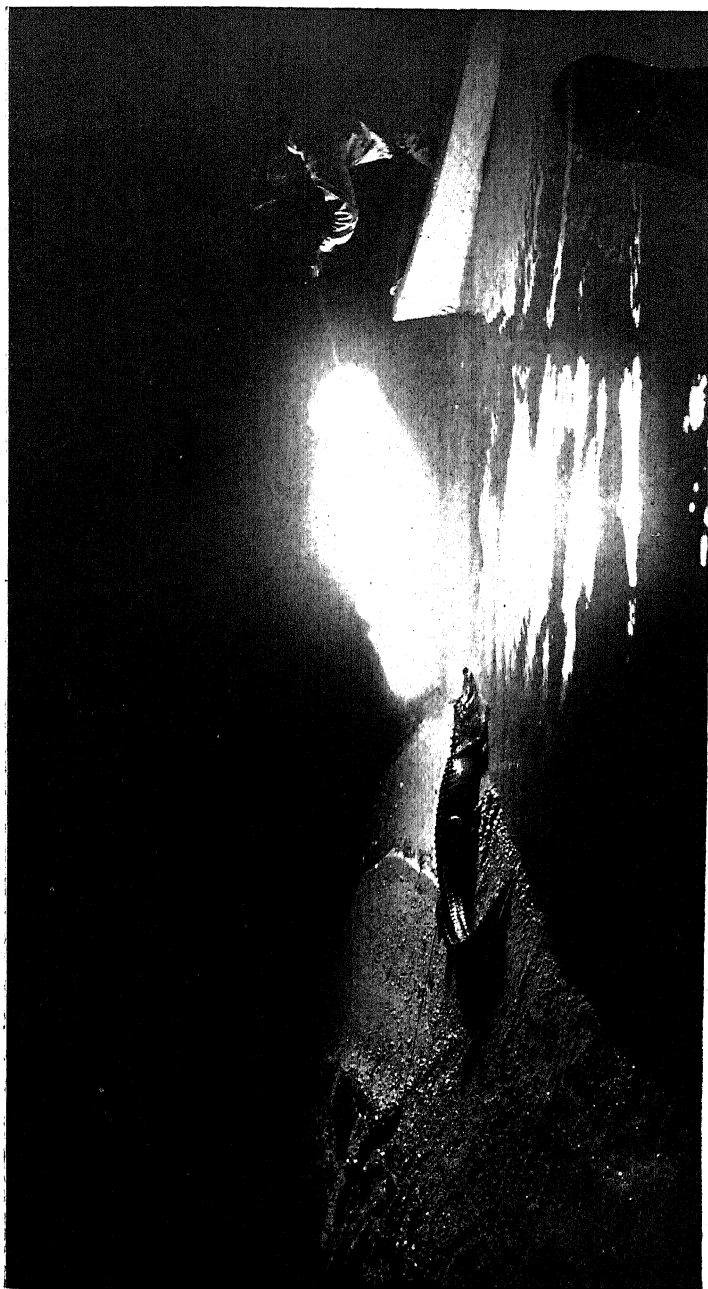
CHAPTER VIII

THE PASSING OF THE FLORIDA ALLIGATOR

THE alligator has always been the picturesque and popular feature of the peninsula of Florida. He enlivened its waters, made his bed on the banks of its streams and, seconded by flocks of snowy heron and other birds of beauty and grace which burdened the trees and filled the air, started the tide of travel that sends fifty thousand tourists to the coast and rivers of Florida each year.

The plumes of the egrets adorn the hats of the women, the tourist has murdered the birds that beckoned him; therefore, to the few surviving alligators attaches the credit of creating a northern state on the border of the tropics. This creature has served as a target for nearly every rifle that was ever brought into the state and deserves a better fate than extinction. It is under ordinary conditions practically harmless, and I have never known it to attack anyone, nor have I ever heard of an authentic case of its doing so. If wounded, or surprised in its lair and cornered, it would no doubt put up a stiff fight and become dangerous, but generally speaking is as harmless as a Florida cow, nay even more so, for the Florida cow has been known to kill people.

Sportsmen and tourists have done what evil they could, but the deadly foe of the alligator, the implement that has nearly compassed his extinction and driven him from every river and lake on the coast, is the bull's-eye lantern. Its glare hypnotizes and holds helpless the reptile as the gleaming eye of the snake is reputed to fascinate (but probably doesn't) the fluttering bird. Fire-hunting for alligators is a business, is butchery—bloody and revolting. Yet the sportsman's first fire-hunt with firearms—and it should be his last—is all romance and thrill, until the last bloody act. I first bound the bull's-eye upon my own forehead when in camp beside an inland salt water lake in South Florida. Because of lack of padding or a skull too thin the lantern bruised my head and blistered my brains, but the pictures painted that night remain bright in my memory. I crouched in the bow with my rifle beside me as the captain sculled the skiff across the end of the lake and into a narrow creek, the mouth of which was hidden by bushes. We cut away tangles of vines and dragged the skiff under branches and over roots, lighted only by the single beam from the lamp on my forehead. As we emerged into a small open pond a loud *Whoo-hoo-hoo* from the thick foliage over my head was answered from out of the darkness across the pond. The silence that followed was broken a minute later by the distant cry of a panther. The skiff was motionless, and as I let the beam of light from the lantern stray over the calm surface of the lake and play among the roots of the mangroves on its



Fire-hunting is the deadliest of the methods of pursuing these saurian.

The Passing of the Florida Alligator

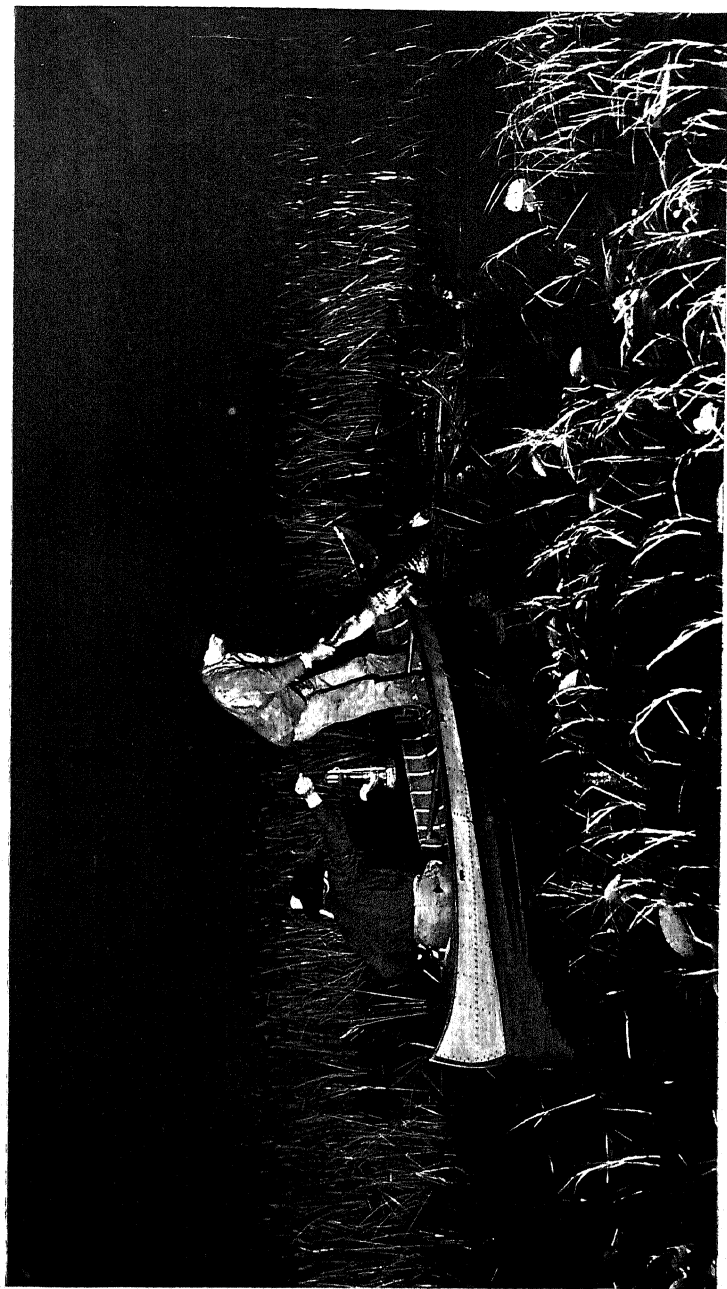
border, I saw a reptile in each lump of mud and twisted tree trunk. Then, as the skiff glided silently along the shore, the soft step of a wildcat, the squabbling of coons and the sudden flight of startled birds got on my nerves; the solid blackness outside of the tiny searchlight was peopled with strange wild creatures and when a frightened frog splashed in the water beside us, the circle of light from my lantern flashed to the tree tops, and the captain behind me chuckled. I asked him in a whisper if he had seen any alligators. "Plenty, the lake's full of 'em; just run over one," he replied, adding with gentle sarcasm: "'gators don't climb trees."

For the next few minutes I took lessons in fire-hunting and learned to recognize the dull red reflected gleam from the reptile's eye and to judge of his size, when both eyes showed, from their distance apart. I steadied the light on a pair of widely separated eyes that seemed to float far out from shore. As the skiff moved toward them I could trace the outlines of the head and back of a large alligator floating on the surface. As I was lifting my rifle the captain whispered, "Not yet," and again, "Not yet," until, when at length I fired, I took no aim but held my weapon so near the creature's head that the powder must have burned him as the bullet smashed his skull. Since that night I have often fire-hunted with a camera but never with firearms.

A score of years ago the water in the Big Cypress country was filled with alligators and it was not uncommon for fire-hunters to take a thousand of the rep-

tiles from a single small lake. I once photographed a portion of a circular pond, one hundred yards in diameter, enclosed in a cypress strand and the print showed seventy-three alligators floating or swimming upon the surface of the water. While exploring the country north of Cape Sable I camped one night with my guide on the border of a lake of mingled mud and water stirred by small tarpon and other fish and reptiles to the consistency of porridge. The water that I ate failed to satisfy me, and the mosquitoes drove me early under my bar, hungry and thirsty. The step of a bear near our bars woke us up in the early evening and we crawled out with our rifles in the light of a moon that was nearly full. We crawled back pretty quick, my guide having stepped on a cactus and I having been attacked by a solid mass of mosquitoes, so savage that they frightened me. As I couldn't sleep I asked my guide to tell me what he knew of the lake beside which we were camped.

"You know my old partner," said he, "Will Stevens, the feller that was shot at Naples, he went guidin' for you once? Well him and me took 'leven hundred 'gators out o' that pond one year and we skinned most on 'em on that little island you saw there. We packed pieces of dry goods boxes from Low's place at the Cape and made a boat. I reckon I'll find it in the morning, 'taint likely anybody's bothered with it. Pond was jest the way you see it now, gar fish stickin' up their noses all over it, little tarpon rollin' and jumpin', only the 'gators was thick



Taking the victim aboard.

The Passing of the Florida Alligator

and when I first see it I jest got behind a bush and grunted and I'll bet I could hav' walked clean to that island without steppin' off 'n their backs. First off we didn't need a light to shoot 'em, but after we'd thinned 'em down a bit we used to shoot 'em at night, 'bout all we could skin next day. One day when we was skinnin' on the island, somehow the boat got away and drifted ashore. Will said he'd swim fer it providin' I'd stand by with the rifle and keep off the 'gators. Well, when he got most ashore I began to shoot all 'round him and hollered to him to swim fast, thet the 'gators was after him. He most busted hisself gettin' to shore and I near died laffin', but he jest walked off an' left me alone on thet island with a lot o' stinkin carcasses 'till most night the nex' day. I ain't usually 'fraid o' 'gators and would hev swum ashore, but this time they was too damn thick and I reckon I must hev scared myself when I frightened my partner."

Notwithstanding the great slaughter of alligators the crop held out for many years and as recently as 1898 the principal dealer on the west coast of Florida bought three or four hundred hides daily from about fifty hunters and kept a schooner running to Key West with hides and returning with cargoes of salt, ammunition and grub. The price paid alligator hunters for hides varies from one dollar for those measuring seven feet, or over, down to ten cents for such as measure less than four feet in length.

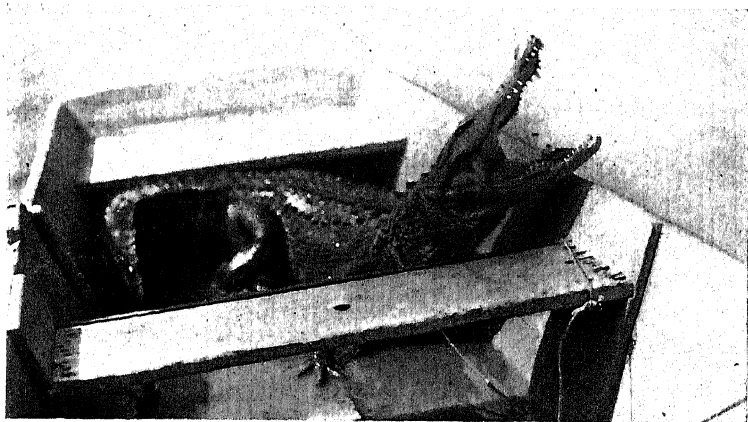
Fire-hunting is so deadly that after a hunter has swept the surface of a river with his light it is scarcely

worth while to look for alligators in that stream. The fire-hunter has so nearly wiped out the saurian inhabitants of the rivers and lakes of the coast that their pursuit no longer affords him a living. Yet whatever the work to which the hunter turns for support, he always stands guard against the return of the alligator. Last year I used to visit a colony of five alligators which I found at Clam Slough on the west coast near Marco. One evening a Marco boy was told that 'gators had been seen at Clam Slough. "I'll go down to-night and git 'em," said he. I said nothing. My alligators were doomed. I could have saved them this time but the next native who heard of them would have gathered them in. The boy sculled a leaky little canoe that wouldn't safely hold two people out the big pass into the Gulf of Mexico on a moonless night, down the coast to Clam Slough, where he found and killed the five 'gators. He loaded his canoe to the gunwales with the carcasses and I saw him at the Marco store the next day swapping five alligator hides for three dollar's worth of ammunition, tobacco and grits.

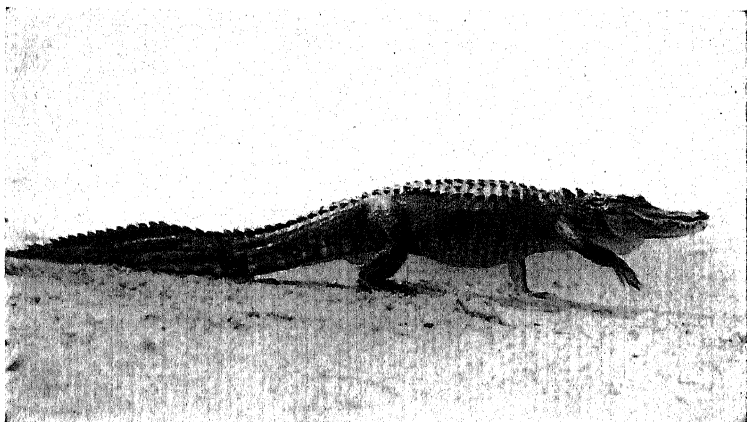
The small remnant of the reptiles has been driven to its last refuge, its caves in the Big Cypress and the Everglades, where they are followed by a few hunters armed with iron rods, hooks and axes, as neither rifle nor lantern is required in their work. In the dry season the water of the swamps and prairies recedes, leaving little shallow ponds and water holes dug by the alligators, from which they are hauled with hooks and knocked in the head by the hunters.



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- (1) Two dots on the surface indicate a 'gator. (2) It is wise to let him have his end of the boat. (3) "Good-bye, I'm going home!"

The Passing of the Florida Alligator

These ponds and holes are filled with venomous snakes and it is the belief of hunters that as the alligators are killed off the moccasins increase. Sometimes thirty or forty of these poisonous snakes can be seen about a single alligator cave. If the hunter happens to wear boots he kicks the moccasins out of his way with the contempt which familiarity breeds. But even the hunter, when he hears the jarring of rattles, climbs a tree till he has located the king of snakes. Many hunters carry hypodermic syringes and permanganate of potassium, but few have faith in the drug as an antidote, and all have grewsome stories to tell of the effects of the venom secreted by the snakes.

The alligators killed at such hazard are skinned, the hides salted and carried over bad trails and through swamps on the backs of hunters, and then poled in canoes many miles to the store of a trader, where they are sold for an average of less than seventy cents each. It is for this pittance, to a few of her citizens, that Florida permits the destruction of an attraction and an asset worth millions to the state.

The casual cruiser on the west coast of Florida with the usual brass band methods, who explores a river in a day and explores his way through its branches in another, will find the banks bare and the waters barren of alligators, but the camera-man, possessed of the patience of the hunter and the persistence of the naturalist, may even yet obtain the saurian subjects his camera calls for. There are boys on the coast, born with much knowledge of the

alligator and his ways, who will go out with him to the haunts of the reptile on the prairies and in the swamps, will follow a trail to a marshy pond and coax a 'gator to the surface by grunting in his own tongue.

I have seen a barefoot boy, when the reptile refused to respond to his call, wade in the mud to his waist, explore with his toes till he felt the wiggle of the 'gator beneath them, then worry him to the surface, grab him by the nose before he could open his jaws and tow the creature ashore to be photographed. When an alligator that we were hunting crawled into his cave, I held a noosed rope over its mouth while the boy poked a stick through the mud until it hit the creature in his hiding place and soon I had him snared, ready to be dragged out on the prairie and tied, to be kept till the Camera-man was ready for him. Then we turned the reptile loose on a bit of prairie, and the boy and I, armed with sticks, headed him off when he tried to escape, while the Camera-man, with his head in the hood of his instrument, followed the creature about seeking for evidence in the case of "Reason *vs.* Instinct." When the Camera-man was through with him the alligator was set free, a final shot being taken at him as he walked off. Our hunter-boys could never be made to comprehend our reasons for restoring to the creatures their freedom. They understood the photographing, but when this was done why not collect a dollar for the reptile's hide? Their manner implied that to this question no sane answer was pos-

The Passing of the Florida Alligator

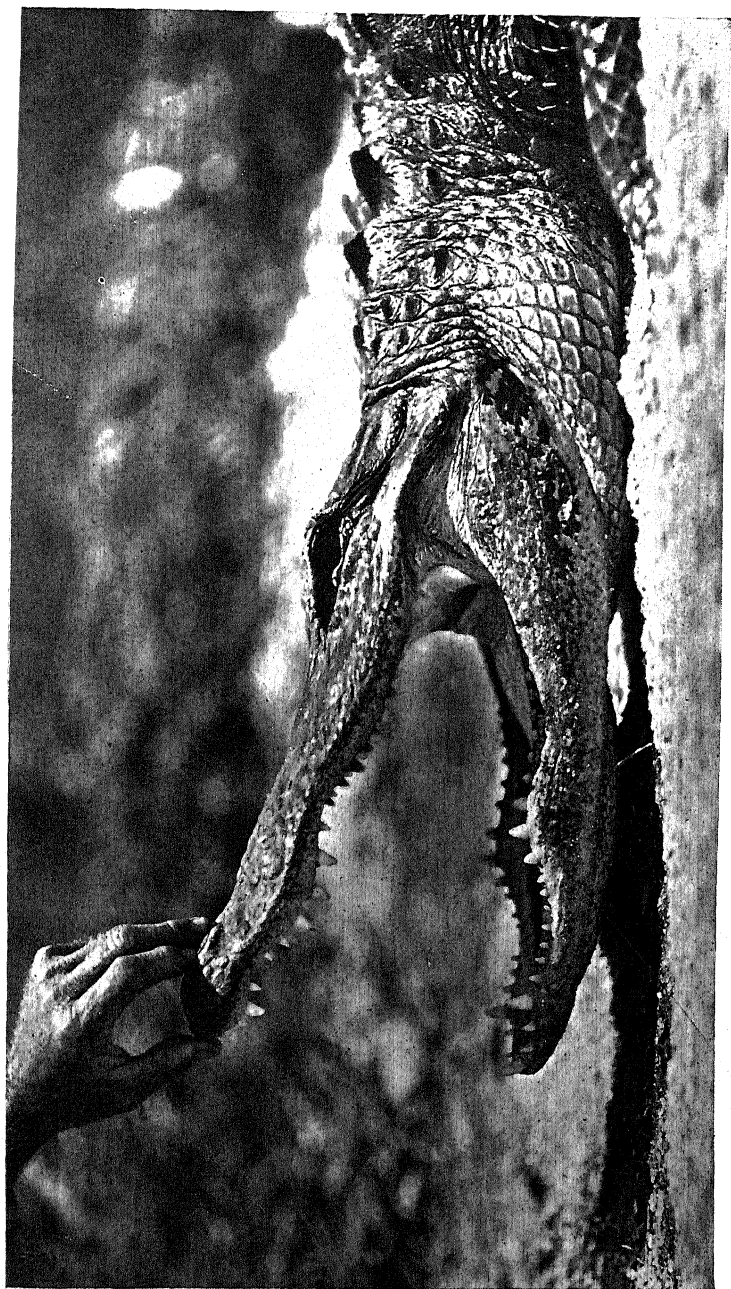
sible. In the open waters of the rivers and the Everglades we used a tiny harpoon, stopped down so that it could only penetrate an inch beyond the barb and inflict but a trifling wound. We put little strain on the harpoon line, the purpose of which was to enable us to follow the creature until we could get a rope around his nose. Sometimes while paddling in a stream, the odor of musk told of the presence of an alligator and scrutiny of the bottom disclosed the reptile near, or under, the boat. Then a noose, made of the end of the painter, was slipped under the nose of the alligator and after a brief struggle the creature was hauled aboard. After a few hours of captivity almost anything could be done with the reptile, although we were always shy of the unfettered jaws of a big one. Our hunter-boy would stand in front of a large alligator and hold his mouth open for the Camera-man, but he was an exceedingly active youth and never failed to jump a little quicker than the reptile. These alligators often played possum with us and allowed themselves to be tied in a skiff without a kick when we wished to tow them to some place convenient for the work of the Camera-man. But they were always on the lookout for a chance to make trouble and once when we were quietly sailing down a river, towing a skiff in which we had tied a 'gator, the creature thought we had forgotten him and breaking one of the lines which held him, bit a piece out of the skiff, capsized it and rolled over and over with it in the water. We lowered our sails and worked frantically to straighten out the tangle before

the reptile could drown. Meanwhile wind and tide swept us into the mangroves, which laid hold of spars and rigging and held us fast where myriads of mosquitoes assembled to drain us of our blood.

For the Nature-student the habits of the alligator hold much interest; to the camera-sportsman he presents delightful possibilities; while to the everyday tourist who will really seek him in his home, he will give an assortment of sensations more thrilling than could be unearthed in a year of ordinary globe-trotting.

Hunt up the haunts of the creature until you find a river that he frequents. Paddle quietly, and alone, down the stream and up the creeks and branches that enter it, till you find on the bank the bed of an alligator with signs of his recent presence. Hide your skiff, sit down on the bed and wait for him to come home. By and by, out in the middle of the stream, you may see three little black dots, the nose and eyes of your absentee landlord, and soon the whole head, tail and back may appear. He will swim slowly toward you and probably sink gradually beneath the surface before reaching the bank. If he comes on and crawls up on the bank beside you it will be a high tribute to your coolness and complete control of your nerves, and the incident will make a pleasant place in your memory.

It happened once to me that after sitting silently in my skiff for half an hour wondering why an alligator I had seen didn't show up, I chanced to look down and saw his head resting quietly on the surface



An angry nine-foot alligator posing for his picture.

The Passing of the Florida Alligator

of the water within twelve inches of my hand as it lay on the gunwale. It gives a sensation to be remembered to sit thus, motionless, watching the unwinking eyes of this free, wild, powerful brute fixed gravely on your face, the huge jaws and the little that shows of the long white teeth within reach of your hand and your hand within reach of jaws and teeth. Of course if you have the mediæval instincts of some sportsmen you may slowly, so slowly, reach for the weapon beside you and send a steel-jacketed cylinder through the brute brain and a couple of days later watch a bloated carcass floating high on its way to the Gulf, giving off an odor appropriate to the incident.

It is up to those of us who claim to be Nature-lovers to look after the Florida alligator. We have just organized a society to weep at the bier of the bison, a creature which has been dead so long that he can be spoken of as was Lazarus, and have promoted clubs without number which pester Congress and the States to prevent by law the killing of game birds and beasts for food, that we may kill more of them for fun. We are working, almost without hope, for birds that are nearly extinct and animals which have been banished from their environments by the requirements of Civilization, but we are neglecting a creature whose existence is imperiled, although his habitat is secure, his sustenance not threatened, and he only needs to be let alone to restore life and attractiveness to the waterways of a great national playground.

THE BEE HUNTER

CHAPTER IX

THE BEE HUNTER

SMITH loved solitude, when he could share it with his friends. So he urged us to join him at his camp in the Big Cypress, which he described as a land flowing with (tinned) milk and (wild) honey. He was fattening himself on venison and wild turkey, wrote of bear and panther, recommended a 30.30 Winchester, a 12-bore pump-gun with smokeless cartridges, and sent Bill, his "guide, philosopher and friend," to pilot us into his wilderness. We had long known Bill as an all-around hunter and trapper whose specialty was bee-hunting, and as a bee campaign was on our program we armed ourselves with modern cameras and plate ammunition, in place of the archaic weapons suggested by our friend, and with a compass, toothbrush and head-net each, together with some non-essential clothing, stowed ourselves away in Bill's skiff.

We threaded narrow channels that zizagged among keys of the Ten Thousand Islands, crossed wide, shallow bays with oyster bars over which the skiff had to be dragged, passed through openings which projecting mangrove bushes had closed to the eye, poled up creeks so crooked that snakes lost their way in them, until we reached Bill's shack, which was on

the mainland. Here we exchanged the skiff for a mule and cart. The water voyage had been dry, the journey by land was mostly through water, over boggy prairie, between web-footed cypress trees standing in pools of water, with occasional stretches of sandy pine land. We made slow progress along an invisible road, through a country which has been described as "not wet enough for frogs, but most too wet for folks." More frequently we carried the cart than rode in it. If we dodged the devil of a boulder on one side, we fell into the deep sea of a mudhole on the other. When the low-hanging axle brought up against a cypress knee and jarred the teeth out of our heads, we got out in the mud and boosted the cart over the trouble. Riding soon tired us and we waded for a rest, waded and walked, until night came and we had covered only fifteen of the twenty-three miles which lay between the shack we had left and the camp we were bound for. When the mule had been turned loose to forage for thistles or such other delicacies as were available, Bill started a fire with fat chunks of the pine that grew around us and cut the bud from a cabbage palmetto for our supper. We made beds of palmetto fans, lay down under the stars and listened to Bill's quaint stories of hunting adventures, of curious facts which he had learned and happenings which he had seen; then, as he wandered into other fields, inviting polemical discussion of religious dogmas which he had picked up or invented, we glided into dreamless slumber from which we awakened to see Bill and the mule



Cutting down the bee tree.

ready to strike the trail. The sun had not risen and I was troubled to get my bearings, for every pine tree looked like its neighbor, every cypress strand was merely a replica of every other cypress strand, palmetto groups were alike as twins, expanses of open prairie bore to other expanses the mutual relation of peas in a pod, yet Bill walked in front of the mule, in a line that was straight, eight miles to Smith and his camp.

We were welcomed with a whoop to the campfire with its pot of grits which we proceeded to assimilate, while Bill and his brother broiled big chunks of wild turkey for our three overdue meals. When the after-dinner pipe had been smoked, the wild turkeys in the larder exhibited and post-mortems held after the manner of sportsmen, Bill put a coal from the fire on a piece of honeycomb which he laid on top of a curious up-thrusting growth called cypress knee, and before he had reached the end of his next story several bees had followed up the trail of the smoking honey and loaded themselves with the treasure trove. As they flew away, I failed to see whither, Bill said they were from two hives, one of which was from some tree almost due south from us and the other in one about northeast. After watching the honey bait for a few minutes he said the hive to the south was nearest. I asked him how he knew and he replied, "Bees get back sooner." I didn't believe him, but refrained from telling him so. He put the smoking bait in a little box with a sliding glass top in which he captured several bees. He then moved

about a hundred yards to the east and released a bee which took a course something west of south. Bill said we would find the hive "in them cypress over 'n that swamp 'bout a quarter off." We walked to the swamp and waded in, swerving from a bee line only to avoid impenetrable tangles and keep out of deep holes. Squirrels looked down on us from the branches of tall trees, wading birds flew flabbily before us and once Bill kicked aside a moccasin that seemed about to strike. As we walked farther in the swamp Bill moved more and more slowly, gazing intently upward and studying the top of every big tree. After we had gone a quarter of a mile he turned loose another bee which flew to the north. Bill said we had gone past the hive and asked me where my eyes had been. Then he exclaimed, "There it is!" and pointing out a big cypress about fifty yards away tried to make me see a knot-hole fifty feet from the ground which he said was the door to the hive. I told him that I could see the tree all right, that it might have a knot-hole, though it would take a telescope to prove it, but as to seeing bees at that distance it couldn't be done. He tried to show me the yellow stain of wax left around the hole by the feet of the bees and promised me a view at short range the next morning.

We returned to camp and learned that Smith had gone into the near-by hammock to find out what was exciting his dog, which could still be heard barking angrily. A little later we heard two shots from the thick woods where he had gone, followed by the



The home of the bees laid bare.

savage barking of a very much agitated dog, which Bill said must be in a mix-up with a wild-cat. Our surmising was cut short by the hunter's signal for help, two shots in quick succession followed by a third after a brief interval. Bill and his brother started on a run in the direction of the sound and remained away so long that we were considering a relief expedition when "three men and a dog," covered with mud and glory and bearing the carcass of a panther that from tip to tip measured ninety-four inches, returned to camp. Smith had followed his dog into a thicket where he was barking at something which Smith supposed was a coon. When he found himself looking into the eyes of a panther that crouched on a limb twenty feet above him, he was reminded unpleasantly of the fact that, instead of a rifle, he held in his hand a fowling piece loaded with small shot. The time seemed long, as he stood within a single bound of the most dangerous of wild animals, with eyes fixed upon his, slowly feeling out bird cartridges from his gun and pressing shells loaded with buckshot in their places, but there was surely neither haste nor nervousness in the cautious motion that lifted the weapon to his shoulder, and when the flame streamed from it the sights were in accurate alignment with the brain of the savage beast. The panther partly sprang and partly fell to the ground, receiving a second shot which was fired from precaution rather than necessity. It isn't every day that a hunter gets a panther, nor is it every hunter that ever gets one, and we sympathized with Smith

in his struggle to maintain before the campfire, as we talked far into the night, the air of nonchalance which he at first assumed. But there was a fly in the ointment of the Camera-man when he heard of the pose of the panther.

For the hunt of the next morning we arrayed ourselves in defensive armor of head-nets, padded gloves, coat sleeves tied at the wrists, and trousers at the ankles. The professionals, Bill and his brother, without gloves or netting, attacked with axes the big cypress, which the bees had homesteaded, but when the tree fell they protected themselves from the enraged insects by the smoke of burning palmetto fans which they carried in their hands as they quickly plugged up the front door of the bee habitation. They were not afraid of the bees, but were mindful of the monition of Mohammed and tied their camels before trusting them to God. The bee-hunters sounded the trunk of the fallen tree with their axes and began splitting off a big chip six feet long and including about one-fourth of the circumference of the tree. Just before the axe broke through into the cavity where the bees were making merry music, Bill started a smudge under the tree and within its friendly refuge split off the chip and laid open the store of accumulated honey. The hunters retired, the bees swarmed forth filling the air with their angry buzzing and the hour of the Camera-man had come. He found the bees and the bees found him. There were crevices in his armor, bare wrists, thinly covered sections of sensitive skin and exposed spots, and the insects



The comb and bees.

located them with accuracy. His head-net prevented accurate focusing and he tore it off; he couldn't press the bulb with padded gloves so he laid them aside, for otherwise the expedition would be a failure and it was better to return on his shield than without it. Thereafter the chivalrous bees lit on his face and hands and crawled over them but never again stung him. He photographed them, as well as the honey-filled comb, of which full fifty pounds rested within the hollow of the cypress, built there in rows overlapping each other, arranged with an architectural skill worthy of their repute as the primal geometricians. He photographed groups of bees as they clustered on adjacent logs or cypress knees and contemplated the ruins of their heritage. When the Camera-man rested from his labors he refreshed himself with big mouthfuls of honeycomb, illustrating the economic policy of transferring goods "direct from the producer to the consumer." After the bees had quieted down, the bee-hunters robbed them of the property they had accumulated, tearing away with bare hands great pieces of comb over which scores of bereaved bees were crawling and unconcernedly brushed aside the rightful owners as they put their honey into big pails provided to contain the plunder. For hours after the destruction of their home many of the bees remained, crawling over the log and mourning their misfortunes as they ate crumbs of scattered comb, while even a week later a few could still be found contemplating the ruins.

The wild bee like his tame brother has his favorites

among human kind. He confers his friendship on some and extends enmity to others without discoverable reasons. In general, steady nerves and slow motions will save one from trouble with bees even when they light on his bare face and hands, but there are persons for whom bees seem to have a reasonless antipathy and whom they sting at sight.

In the frozen North, to rob a bee tree is often to destroy its population, but in this land of everlasting summer with ever blooming flowers it only gives the community a lesson, worthy of more extended application, on the folly of hoarding beyond one's needs. Bill told us of a bee tree which he had marked some months before, containing, he thought, a big lot of honey. He guided us three miles in a bee line, through swamp and forest, straight to the tree, only to find after felling it, that a colony of ants had forestalled us and robbed the bees with a thoroughness that left nothing to console their successors.

The life of the bee hunter is not strenuous along modern lines. Starting with a bit of honey and a few cartridges for his rifle, he will spend weeks in the woods, living on the country, eating venison and wild turkey and sleeping under the stars. For his few civilized requirements of clothing, coffee, ammunition and utensils he draws on his banks in the hollow trees and the Big Cypress. You can go with him and find rest and zest in the great wilderness, if the true spirit of the campfire possesses you. He is your peer by virtue of his better knowledge of the things that count in the primitive life you must lead. The



Protected only by a little smoke the bee hunters take out the comb with bare hands.



Smith, in gloves and head-net, inspects the honey.

wider your experience in the great world outside, the keener will be your enjoyment of the simplicity of his environment.

When Bill was struck by a rattlesnake, which sunk its fangs deep in his flesh, Smith, who happily was with him, instantly put his lips to the wound and sucked out as much of the deadly venom as possible. For a time the issue was uncertain, yet in a few weeks Bill was again tramping the woods and swamps as unconcernedly as if he had not so lately looked deep into the eyes of Death.



The next day the cavity was filled with bees.

PHOTOGRAPHING A SAWFISH

CHAPTER X

PHOTOGRAPHING A SAWFISH

MAKE him jump, I want more action," said the Camera-man, with his eyes buried in the hood of his instrument.

"Sawfish don't jump! What you want is more imagination—and a pencil. Then you'd be up-to-date."

The Camera-man was ungrateful. The biggest sawfish in the country had been harpooned for him; during a struggle of two hours the creature had done everything a sawfish knows how to do, and now two of us were resting, I with feet braced against the forward thwart, weight bearing on the harpoon line, and the huge fish so near us that every swing of his big saw landed a blow upon the bow that sent shivers through the skiff and the folks in it.

Some hours earlier, the beginning of the incoming tide had found me standing in the bow of a skiff which my boatman slowly sculled through one of the channels that wound among the shallow banks lying at the southern end of the peninsula of Florida. As the water had deepened on the banks, schools of silver mullet spread over them, seeking food one moment, and the next leaping in panic from some

enemy, real or fancied; sheephead showed their stripes of black and white near the bottom, and drumfish left V-shaped trails on top of the water; channel bass, so big that the hand holding the harpoon was lifted involuntarily, darted fiercely upon their prey; sting-rays, from their beds on the banks, stirred up clouds of mud as they scurried away; the bayonet fin of a tarpon cut the water near me and invited the weapon which would have been thrown, had I not remembered just in time that he was not on our program for the day; families of dolphins came rolling toward us, but just beyond the possible range of a harpoon, lifted high their heads, gave us one slow comprehending glance, and a line of bobbing heads left a straight wake halfway to the horizon; the fin of a large shark gliding above the surface of the water, followed by a tail swaying from side to side with a quick uniform stroke, tempted me too far and the harpoon sunk in his body, but the line scarcely tautened, for the fish, turning quickly, cut it with his fine saw teeth and swam away with my beautiful harpoon of tempered tool steel, the evolution of years of harpooning. I was chagrined that my slow moving mind had failed to restrain my excited hand, for experience had taught me that sharks always cut the line that is not guarded by chain or wire.

I had hardly fastened a spare harpoon to the line, when there came gliding toward me, with slowly moving weapon, a sawfish of majestic proportions. The whole bottom of the channel seemed in motion, as I looked down upon his broad back. His saw



The die is cast.

was already beneath the bow of the boat and the harpoon must be thrown instantly, if at all. The time for consideration was too short, I acted unwisely, and as the steel entered his body I was thrown to the bottom of the skiff, which was nearly capsized by a blow from the great saw of the fish, so savage, that it broke the weapon in two, about three feet from the head of the fish. For two hundred yards we spurted along the channel, at a rate of speed that must have broken the racing records of his family. My hands were torn and blistered from clutching the line to get under good headway before the end of it was reached. If I failed to well overcome the skiff's inertia, the line would part or the harpoon tear out, for there was *vis viva* in that half-ton of sawfish.

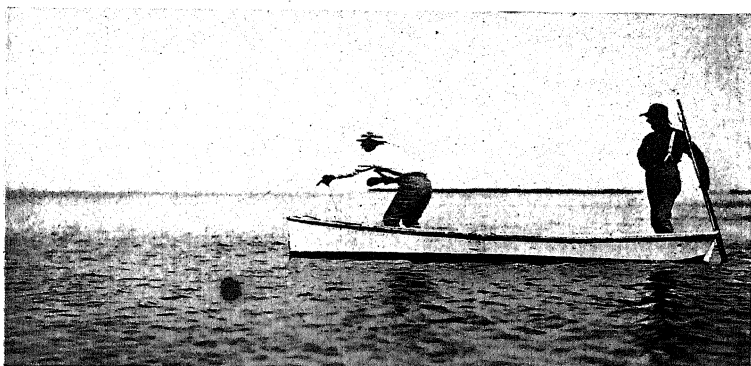
After the first big rush our steed settled down to a jog trot, against which I braced myself, throwing my weight on the harpoon line, with the sensation of driving a hard-mouthed horse with runaway tendencies. For a quarter of a mile we rode joyously, while far behind us, in a skiff with the Camera-man, an oarsman toiled painfully. When the creature, who for the time was running the show, reached the end of the deep water, he turned about and swam back through the same channel. As we passed the other skiff, the click of the shutter was heard and the chase was renewed in the new direction. Again, as the water shoaled, the fish turned, giving me a chance to gather in much of the line and bring the skiff within a few yards of the fish. Here three other large sawfish, each about twelve feet in length, joined the pro-

cession and for several hundred yards swam near us, sometimes beside our fish and sometimes near and under our skiff. Several times the tense harpoon line was struck by one of them and more than once I fancied their attitude was distinctly threatening to our skiff and its occupants. After they had left us, we rowed back and forth over the same course many times. When we passed the other skiff, I usually put an extra strain on the line, hoping to persuade both fish and Camera-man to get busy. When the sawfish stopped in a deep hole and sulked, I was reminded that long ago, when the Camera-man wore knickerbockers, he had played a smaller sawfish for seven hours, up and down this same channel, without tiring anything but himself. Something must be done, for we couldn't spare that much time. It was suggested from the other skiff that we hold back with the oars against the dashes of the fish. A single trial sufficed, two would have implied idiocy, the one so nearly wrecked us. We lashed a hunting knife to the harpoon pole and when next the sawfish sulked, pulled our skiff directly over him and struck. An ugly weapon rose beside us up through the water, like the Excalibur of King Arthur.

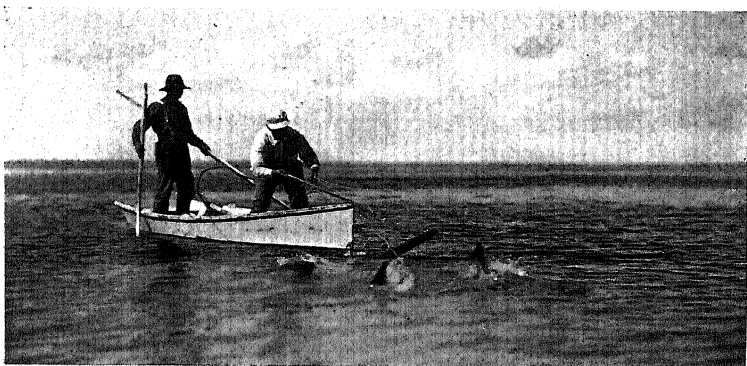
The Camera-man waited for the head to show, and when it didn't appear and he had lost his chance, I upbraided him for expecting a sawfish to lift his head above the surface, like a manatee or a dolphin. We punched the fish again with the knife and he whacked with his broken saw the bottom and side of the skiff which he kept always between himself and the camera.



1



2



3

CATCHING THE SAW-FISH

- (1) There is a big swirl in the water. (2) You attempt to lasso him.
 (3) Succeeding, the struggling fish is drawn to the skiff.

Photographing a Sawfish

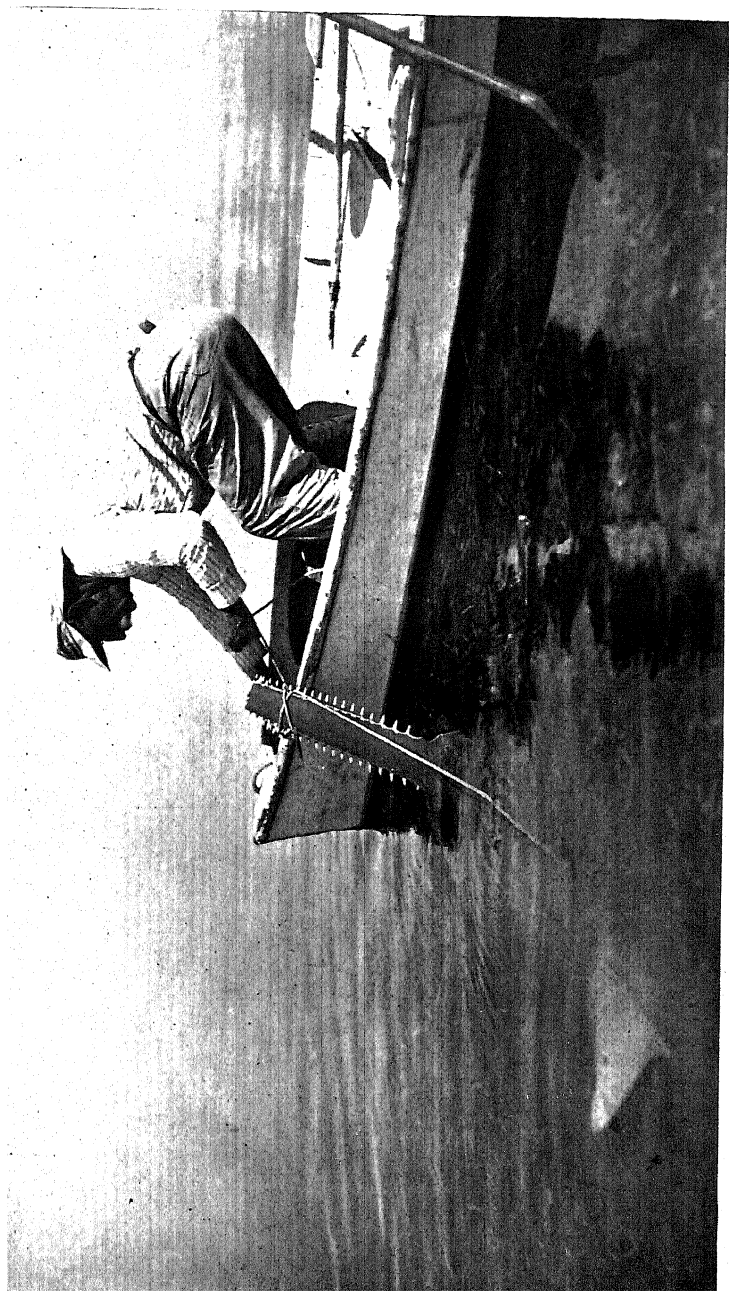
To provide against breaking the harpoon line, we borrowed the outfit of the Camera-man and my boatman put a second iron in the fish. When the flurry which this occasioned was over, we rowed to a bank where the water was so shoal that the fish would have to show up, if he could be towed there. We anchored the skiff to oars driven in the mud and attempted to haul half a ton of unwilling sawfish a hundred yards. It was a fine struggle, but "some laborious" as my boatman, who backed me up on the line, observed. As the fish reached shallow water he woke up, and when he was so near that every other blow of his saw landed on the bow of the skiff, I thought the picture sufficiently realistic and rested. Then it was that the Camera-man called for "more action," and as we struggled to drag the creature yet nearer, I found myself repeating "*Morituri te salutamus*," when, with a sudden violent dash, the sawfish tore the skiff from its moorings and bore us away on another John Gilpin's ride.

When he had again been hauled into shoal water, we cast a line over his saw, passed it through the ring-bolt at the bow and lashing him to the skiff, fore and aft, started on a tempestuous voyage to the launch which carried us between our cruising boat and the cruising ground of the day. A heavy line from the launch was made fast to the tail of the sawfish, which was then cut loose from the skiff. Starting the motor was the beginning of a new contest. The balance of power was in favor of the fish, but the persistence of the engine won the battle. The launch gained head-

way for a moment, losing it at the next dash of the fish. Each sideplay of the latter threw the boat off its course, and its occasional blows on the planking jarred the craft from propeller to bow. The sawfish measured 15 feet 8 inches, and its weight probably exceeded 1,000 pounds. Yet his body was eaten that night by "Big John," a dragon of a shark, with a local reputation of mythologic flavor, the story of whose life is not complete, but—I have hopes.

Harpooning sawfish is a sport covering a wide range of sensations. The emotions extend from gentle agitation to delirious excitement, and the sportsman may measure them out to suit his requirements as accurately as he can apportion the contents of his flask. Give the fish plenty of line and play him gently, and he will tow you with sedateness for miles. Shorten the line, pull the skiff up beside him, and if the bay is shallow, his struggles will deluge you with splashing water and his big weapon beat upon your skiff with a violence that will satisfy any normal craving for excitement. Better, then, be ready to drop to the bottom of the skiff, for that broad four-foot saw, with its fifty-two teeth, may sweep with the power of a pile-driver across the gunwale of your boat, with *hara-kiri* the probable result of getting in its path. One of my boatmen always refused to put me up to a sawfish. His sufficient excuse was, "The last man I did that-a-way to was my brother and the sawfish killed him."

The sawfish is found in all the streams and bays of the west coast of Florida, but it most abundant in



During the fracas he breaks his saw on the boat.

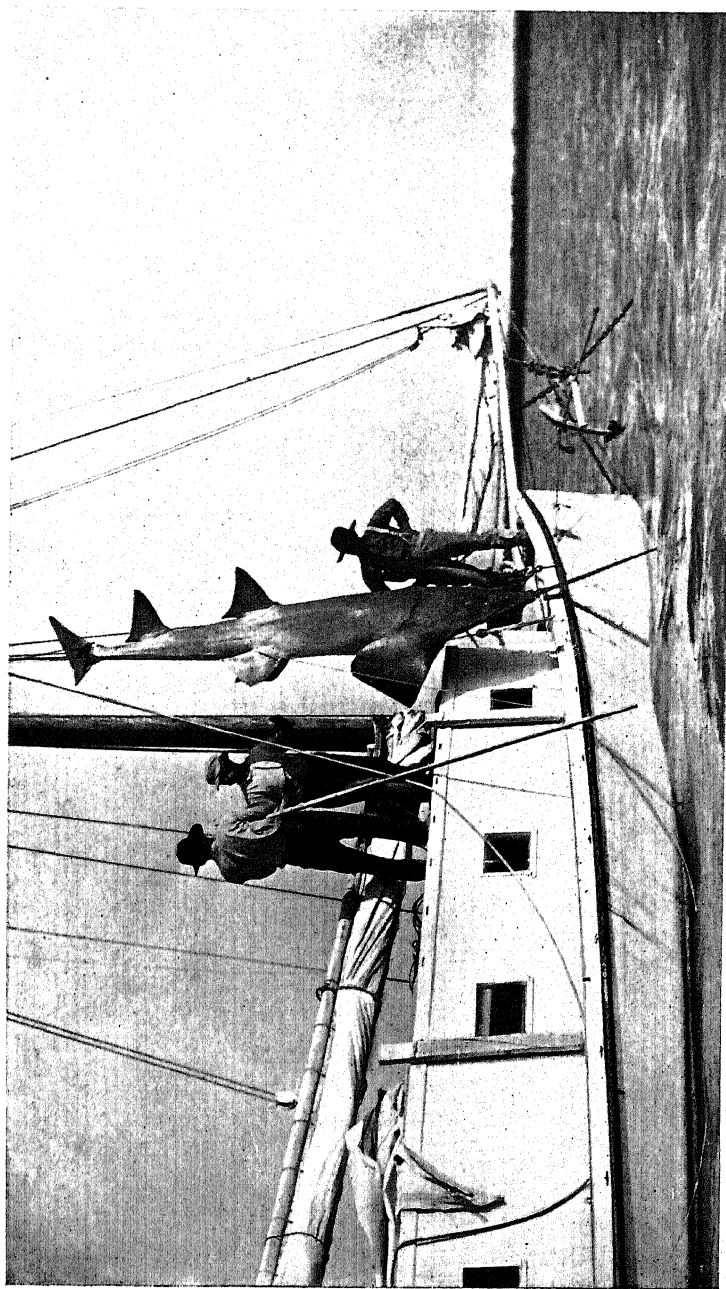
the shallow waters east and south of Cape Sable. Many follow the channels that lead from Joe Kemp's Key and, as the tide rises, spread over the banks that lie to the eastward, feeding on the mullet and other small victims of their slashing saws. They can then be seen from a long distance and distinguished from other fish by the three big fins which they trail tandem above the surface of the water.

The sportsman stands in the bow of his skiff, with his harpoon ready in his hand, and is poled or sculled in the wake of the three fins. The first vain throw at the form beneath the fins teaches him that it was only the tail he had seen, the broad body and swaying weapon of the creature lying far in advance of the fins that appear on the surface. His next chance may come from a fish swimming toward him, which he only sees as the saw glides beneath the bow of his boat and a broad back lies beneath his poised harpoon. If he must have excitement, he strikes and gets it; if of a prudent mind, he waits for a chance to throw his iron into a fish from behind or beside those three fins, that the first rush of the quarry may be less embarrassing.

Harpooning the sawfish pays bigger dividends of legitimate excitement than most methods of fishing or hunting. Its successes are personal, justly belonging to the individual sportsman and not to the guide, who so often should be credited with the trophies of the chase which hang in fashionable halls. It may fail to meet that crude requirement, that to legitimize sport the carcass of the game, except-

ing, perhaps, the fox or the anise-seed bag, must be eaten.

Yet the casuist might urge that its flesh feeds worthy sharks, and if the plea is denied because sharks ought to be killed and not fed, there remains the argument that the sawfish is himself a shark.



Our record fish. Fifteen feet ten inches long.

A FLORIDA FAMILY'S PICNIC

CHAPTER XI

A FLORIDA FAMILY'S PICNIC

MR. MACK was the boss fisherman of the west coast of Florida, with house and warehouses in its chief city. His brand was known throughout the country and standardized the goods it covered. The shanties resting on piles in the shallow bays and the palmetto shacks on the shore of the coast were the quarters of his employees during the fishing season, where ice was kept, nets overhauled and repaired and the men slept by day, for fishing with nets in that country is mostly night work. No union dictated the hours of labor, which, governed by vagaries of fish and weather, were sometimes twenty-four to the day and sometimes no hours for a week.

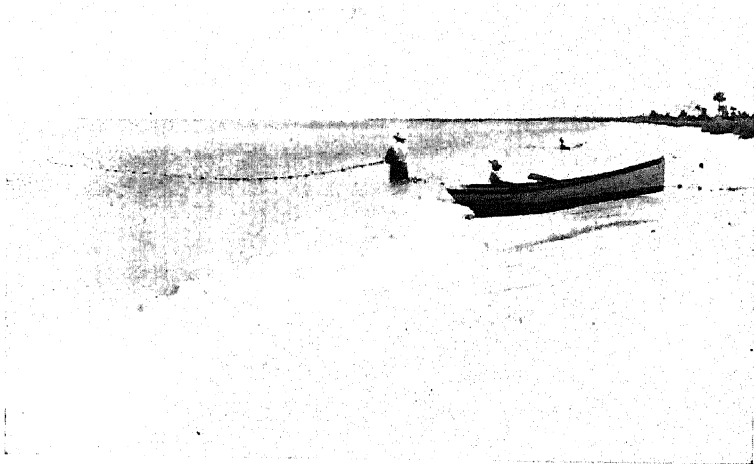
Fifty weeks in each year Mr. Mack devoted to his business, a fortnight belonged exclusively to his family. When this playtime came, the best boat in his fishing fleet, which had once been a famous yacht, was regularly house-cleaned and fitted up as a residence. Each member of the household arranged his own bunk and belongings and the forty years between the oldest and the youngest melted away and for the time they were all children together. They sailed down the coast with no other crew than they

found in the family, for they were sailors and pilots all, by an education that began generations before they were born.

The boat seemed to sail herself, the wheel rolling idly under the careless hand of a youth whose eyes were inboard and his thoughts wandering, but she always held true to her course. Sometimes a squab of a boy, three feet high, standing, with fat legs spread wide and hands thrust deep in the pockets of his brief little breeches, would say: "That jib oughter be trimmed in," and would waddle forward, brace his little feet and tug at the sheet while his brother at the wheel luffed up to help him. There was skylarking all over the deck, but as the boat went about, somebody always happened to be standing by the mainsheet, while one or two boys were jamming the jib to windward. As they neared a pass small heads would be cocked sideways as their owners scanned the skies for a sight of the moon that they might judge if the tide would let them go through the swash channel.

All nights and many days were spent in little bays or the mouths of rivers, from which the boys explored in skiffs, crabbing in shallow waters, fishing under banks and in the deeper channels, while the older members of the family wandered along the outside beaches, watching the breaking waves and collecting shells of many hues and infinite variety, or gathering cocoa plums and sea-grapes in the thickets behind the beaches.

At Marco the grown-ups found friends to visit,



Fishing for pompano with a net.



Taking the fish from the net.

while the boys explored the cocoanut groves, climbed the lofty palms like squirrels and sent a skiff load of the great nuts tumbling to the ground. Of their wisdom they chose the half-ripened nuts, the soft flesh of which is like unto ice cream without the ice. They sat under tall trees of avocado pears until faces and hands were smeared with the luscious, yellow, cream-like substance of the fruit, and when they went to their home on the boat, their pockets bulged and their shirtwaists threatened to burst with their loads of guavas and limes.

They patched up a net and rowed through the pass to the outer beach in search of a mess of pompano, the choicest food fish of the South. Scanning the water with judgment as mature as they themselves were youthful, they selected a bit of the beach for their first trial, overhauled their net and stowed it in the skiff with all the skill of practiced fishermen. The fattest boy volunteered to act as anchor and sitting down in the surf held on to the staff at one end of the net, the second one rowed the skiff out from the shore and back, in a semi-circle, to the beach, while the third paid out the net as the skiff progressed. The ends of the net were then dragged up on the beach and the boys, working from these ends to the middle, hauled in the whole net, the leaden sinkers sliding along the sand and the cork floats holding the top of the net to the surface. When the net was half on the beach there was commotion in the other half in the water, some pompano dashed into the meshes and others leaped over the cork line, but

enough were caught for a picnic on shore. Broiled pompano was here supplemented by the boiled bud of a young palmetto or cabbage tree, a vegetable which a Southern boy or a bear can extract in a few minutes, while a Northerner, with axe rebounding from the elastic petioles of the big tough leaves which sheathe the young tree, would sweat over the job for an hour.

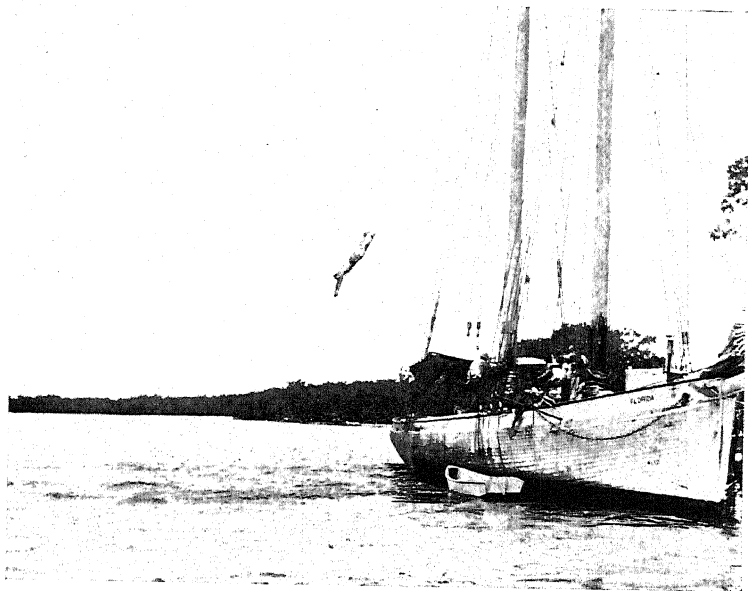
One day while they were at Marco a sloop with sails *en déshabillé*, propelled by a pole, bumped into the piles and its owner crawled out on the dock with bruised and lacerated hands. Montgomery was an old blacksmith from some back country in the North where he had never been exposed to seamanship, and his account of his misfortunes gave the cruising boys fits. He told them he went out to try a boat he had just traded for and first ran into an oyster bed that he couldn't see and then he tripped over the jib string and fell on the tiller handle. When he got up, the boomstick swung across the boat and knocked him overboard into the oyster bed. He explained that he was cut up and badly bruised, but not beaten, and after pushing his boat out into the channel had sailed out of the pass all right, but got into the surf outside, where the waves banged him on the bar and broke the forks of his top boomstick and broke off the bottom boomstick halfway to the end, and then a piece got loose and smashed the top-bottom of his boat. The attempts of the boys to sympathize with the misfortunes of the narrator were painful. They really wanted to be polite but their suppressed mirth struck

in and affected them like the colic. They never fully recovered and as the cruise continued orders to "Leggo the string that's tied to that top-boomstick," became so common that the father of the boys had to issue an injunction against their use for the sake of preserving the purity of the sea-grammar of the family.

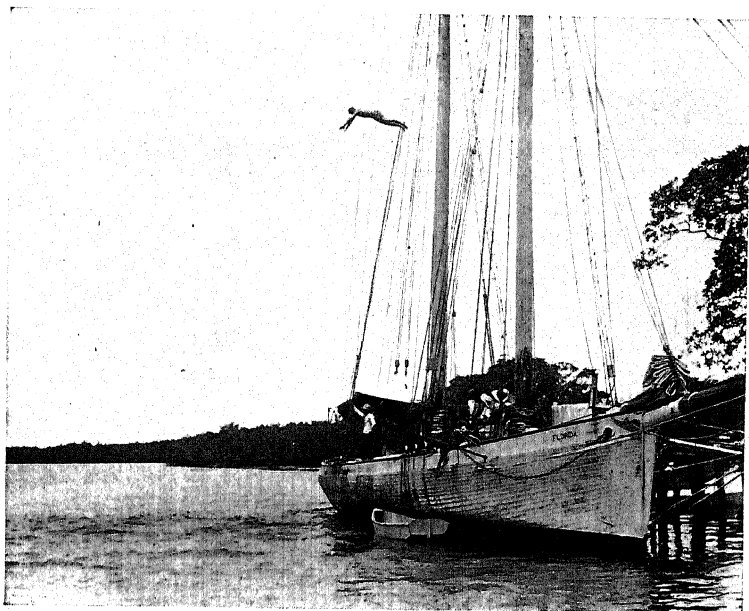
At Caxambas the family found other friends, whose fields were filled with more than a million pine-apples, that is, when the cruisers landed, for when they left the number had been reduced. The boys were amphibious, went overboard on the slightest provocation and played together in the water like young otters. They were proud of their proficiency in water sports and as they ran out on the bowsprit one day and diving deeply swam beneath the surface across the wide channel and then played a game of leap-frog in the water, they succeeded in impressing a youth who stood looking at them from the deck of a Northern boat which was tied to the wharf. He was a son of the owner of the boat and I, who happened to be looking on, was regretting that the harsher climate of his home had probably kept him from acquiring the skill of the boys he was watching, when he suddenly went below and quickly coming back in bathing trunks, ran fifty feet up the rigging to the cross-trees like a cat and dove far out into the stream. He swam swiftly back to his boat, scrambled up to the crosstrees and again sprang far out, this time holding his body horizontally as he fell, until near the surface when he turned a quick somersault

and plunged headfirst deeply in the water. When he came up this time, it was on the farther side of the picnic boat, under which he had swam, and as he joined the boys in their game I wasted no more sympathy on him for his lack of familiarity with the water.

From Caxambas to Cape Sable is mostly clam bed and when it came to treading the raw material of clam chowder out of the oozy mud with bare feet, even the women folks had to be counted in. In the mouths of the rivers the boys could gather in a few minutes from the trees more oysters than they could eat in a week and a net set across any deep channel was pretty sure of a four hundred-pound loggerhead turtle as soon as the tide turned and the net began to "fish." Then, too, there was always the chance, if the place of setting the net was chosen with wisdom, of the capture of a delicate, young, grass-fed green turtle, stuffed with soups, steaks and stews of matchless flavor. One evening they anchored just within the mouth of the beautiful Rodgers River and watched the birds wading upon the shallow banks, and afterward flying to their near-by roosts, until night fell and then, as the boys listened to coons quarreling on the oyster reefs, the occasional scream of a panther and the bellowing of big alligators, they planned for the next day an excursion by land and an exploration by water up the river. But in the soft climate of South Florida days melt away, a ball and chain wouldn't keep the hours in sight, and when the next morning came, Mr. Mack held



"Ran fifty feet up the rigging and dove far out into the stream."



"This time holding his body horizontally."

A Florida Family's Picnic

up his watch to his family and said: "Forty-eight hours more," the boys knew the time had been stretched to the uttermost. A strong wind was blowing from their home two hundred miles away, and they were in honor bound to be there in two days.

In five minutes the boat was close hauled on the first of a series of tacks that would continue night and day up the coast until the anchor was dropped in the harbor of their home.

TARPON FISHING

CHAPTER XII

TARPON FISHING

TARPON fishing is more kinds of sport than any other known game. Tarpon of any age will rise to a fly and young members of the family, from fifteen inches to two feet long, may usually be found in the creeks that feed the rivers of the west coast of Florida and captured with a light trout rod, after a fight more brilliant than was ever put up by the most gallant trout that was ever spawned. The swift waters of the syndicated salmon streams and the rugged country through which they flow, possess peculiar charms with which the placid rivers of the Florida peninsula make no pretense of competing, but the gamiest of salmon compares with the gorgeous Silver King as a Satyr to Hyperion. As a game fish, the tarpon is in a class by himself and it is a waste of time to talk of comparison. He presents an acrobatic performance and chromatic spectacle not paralleled in the animal kingdom. Imagine a gracefully contorted body, as big as yourself, quivering ten feet in the air, panoplied with a thousand glittering silver scales, reflecting, like facets of a great diamond, the rays of a tropical sun, surrounded by a halo of prismatic drops of flying

water and all backgrounded by the massed black clouds and solid wall of falling water of a near-approaching storm. The tarpon fights with all the spirit of the purest strain of race horse, product of a thousand years of selection and training. From the time he feels the steel, until he rolls exhausted on his back, his activity is incessant. He leaps out of the water, several times his own length, from two to a score of times, and the action of his gills and head is so rapid that the eye cannot follow it and we know of it only through the camera which divides time into thousandths of a second. Of a hundred leaps no two are alike and there is individuality in every fish. When struck, your tarpon may leap straight up, or at any angle, or he may skim along the surface of the water, rising clear of it half a dozen times in as many seconds. He may speed like a race horse away from you until your six hundred feet of line runs out, or he may dash straight for your skiff, rubbing against it, diving under it, or even leaping over it and tangling you in your own line. The tarpon lends himself alike to the needs of the diletante of the private yacht and the barefoot boy of the fishing boat. The cost varies: there is the fashionable yacht which disregards expense, the chartered outfit of house-boat, launch and dingeys, with a per diem of from one hundred dollars to half that sum, down to the five dollars and upward of daily disbursement by the personally conducted tourist, and the one dollar or less by cruisers in fishing boats who conduct themselves. Though methods differ so widely,

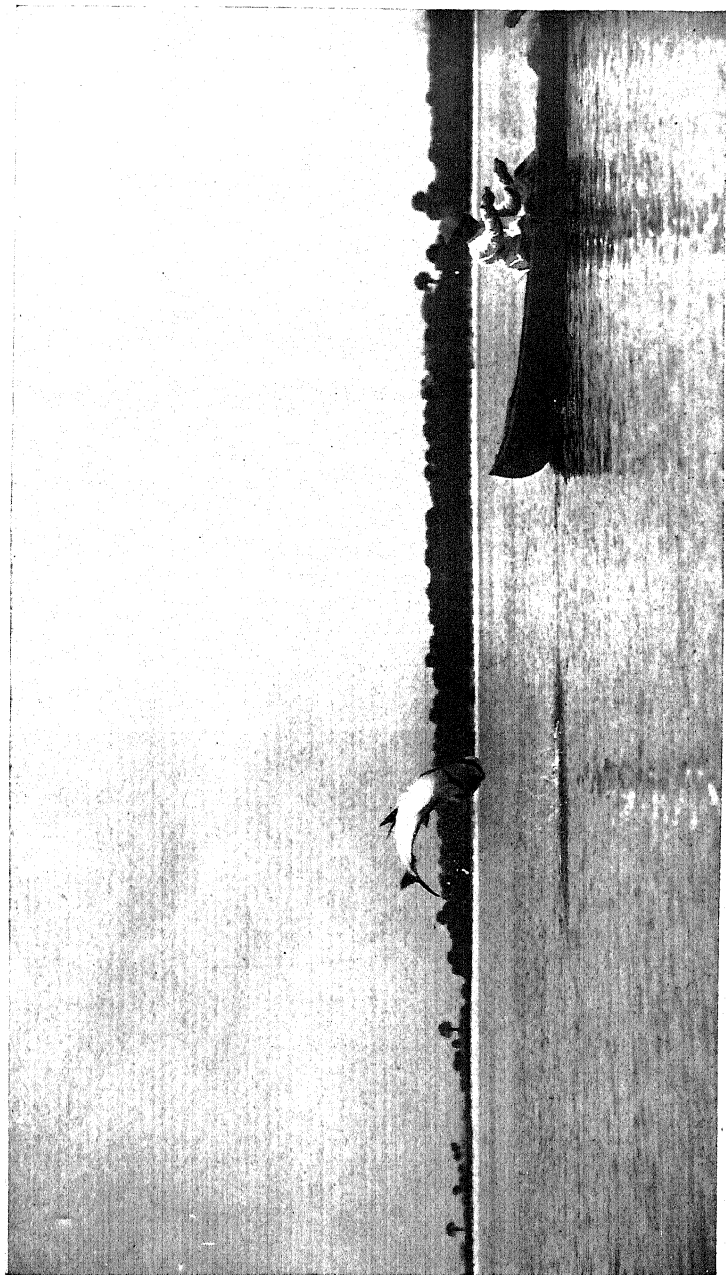
Tarpon Fishing

the result is much the same and the game always worth the candle, whether played with a hundred-dollar tackle outfit, one of four dollars, or a cotton hand line and a pair of canvas gloves. The strenuousness of the sport can be graduated to the weakness of the invalid or the capacity of the athlete.

On the Gulf Coast of Florida the tarpon season is from March to November. They are especially numerous in June and July, and between Capes Romano and Sable a few can be found all the year round. The last hour of the ebb and the first two of the flood can be recommended for trolling, and the slack water of the flood tide for still-fishing, but the only sure time to troll for tarpon is when they are in the humor. The most successful tarpon fisherman of my acquaintance assures me that the more he studies the tastes and habits of the fish the less he knows about them. Sometimes they will take the bait as it touches the water, at others I have vainly dragged it over a deep hole, from which the fish were rising to blow at the rate of five a minute, only to see it knocked three feet in the air by the contemptuous toss of a tarpon's tail. You cannot make an appointment with your tarpon as you do with your dentist. If you are patient, he will come to you in his own good time and bite at any old rag you choose to offer him.

Still-fishing for tarpon is the old and lazy method, but is yet practiced occasionally. Your boatman anchors your skiff beside a channel which runs through the shallow waters where the tarpon finds

his prey. The tarpon hook is attached to the line by a three-foot snood of braided flax or other soft and strong material and is baited with half a mullet. Now cast your baited hook fifty or one hundred feet out in the channel, place your rod across the skiff with its point toward the bait and its reel free to run. Reel off a dozen yards of line, coil it loosely on the seat before you, light your pipe and muse on the infinite, or cut the leaves of the latest magazine, while your boatman "chums" from time to time by casting bread upon the waters in the form of fragments of fish. In a few minutes, or it may be hours, or even days, the line begins to run out, you lay aside your magazine and pick up the rod while your boatman takes in the anchor and sits down to the oars. You must feed out the line as called for, resisting all temptation to strike, until perhaps fifty yards of line have gone and the fish been allowed ample time to swallow the bait. Then pressing your thumb firmly on the brake, "Strike for your altars and your fires." Two hundred feet away a gleaming form of burnished silver leaps, gyrating in the air. The whirling handle of the reel raps your incautious knuckles and the friction of the line burns your thumb through the thick brake of sole leather. You cry out to your boatman as you watch the diminishing line on your reel and he struggles mightily with the oars. Soon the line slackens, as the fish turns, and the multiplying reel spins beneath your nervous fingers as you labor to wind it in. Another leap, the strain on the line shows that the fish is well hooked, and with skill and care



A sudden pull at the line—you awake from your day dreams.

on your part, the chances are now even that you will conquer him. He will play tricks on you, will leap out of the water beside your skiff and then dart under it and away, and as you reel in your line you will find the tip of your rod on the wrong side of the skiff. Only the quickest action, mixed with good luck, can then save you. He will twist the line around a snag or a mangrove root, cut it on an oyster reef, or if the struggle is too prolonged, grind apart the snood between his bony jaws. He may tow you for miles and hours before his leaping is over and he floats vanquished beside the skiff. You should now give him his freedom, but if he is your first tarpon and you wish his scales or skin as souvenirs, you will strike him with the great steel gaff and probably go overboard to him in his final struggle.

The strike, after the first anxious paying out of the line, is not always followed by the leap of a silver king. Sometimes there is a steady tug at the line, which comes back minus the hook, the snood having been bitten in two by a shark. That's what the snood was for, so that the shark could bite it. If steel wire had been used you would have had to choose between cutting the line and being towed for miles until you could get the brute to the surface where you could shoot him or kill him with an axe. Other creatures trouble the tarpon still-fisherman. The sting-ray, unpleasantly armed and hard to handle, the sawfish which will tow you back and forth all day without seeming to know that anything has happened to him, and big three hundred pound jewfish,

great inert masses, catching which is nearly as exhilarating as hoisting an anchor, but which on the Pacific coast are caught, weighed and labeled Black Sea-Bass.

Better than still-fishing is the more modern trolling, or deep-sea fishing, in the big passes, where the rod must be held ready for instant action and conditions of wind and tide become of active and often of controlling interest.

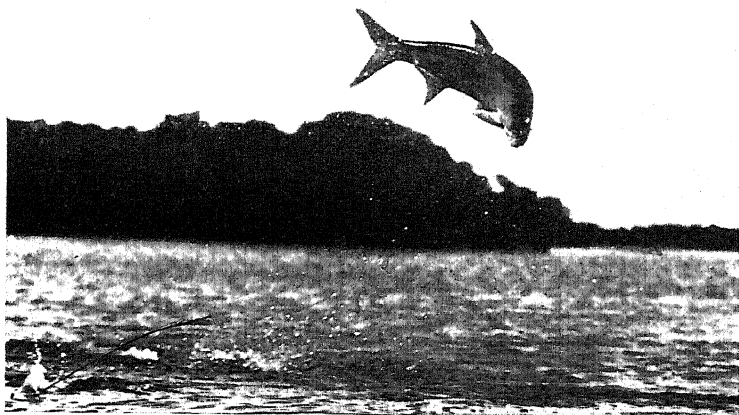
It is in the passes of Charlotte Harbor, notably that of Boca Grande, the big pass, that tarpon fishing *de luxe* has reached its fullest development. Day by day, during April and May, fishermen and fisherwomen gather here from near-by yachts, American and foreign; from house-boats anchored in the harbor north of the pass or in one of the coves south of it; and from hotels, near as Useppi and far as Punta Gorda or Punta Rassa. The typical outfit is a dingey with a little motor and a revolving chair in the stern in which the fisherman sits, facing backwards, also a boatman to do the work. Tackle consists of a twenty-five dollar, one piece, six and a half foot rod, with agate guides and tip; a big forty dollar reel, built like a watch, with jeweled bearings, noiseless machinery and a perfection of action which is a perennial delight to the mechanical eye; a four dollar, twenty-four thread line, two hundred yards long and tested to forty-eight pounds; a dollar hook with a bronze cable and swivels; a socket in the belt to hold the butt of the rod; and a vacuum-surrounded-bottle warranted to keep coffee hot or other

Tarpon Fishing

liquids cold—if the cork is not removed too frequently. A good brake on the rod is essential. Some fishermen wear a thumb stall and press the protected thumb against the line on the reel, others hinge a piece of sole leather on one of the pillars of the reel for the same purpose. The trouble with these methods is that when a fisherman gets real earnest in using them he burns his thumb. The ideal brake is a friction disk device interposed between the reel handle and the reel axle, capable of adjustment by set screws and acting automatically when the handle is held.

The best bait for trolling is a strip of flesh six inches long by one wide, cut from a mullet or some other white-bellied fish, and roughly trimmed to suggest a small fish. When trailed behind a skiff, canoe, or little, slow-moving launch, this lure is very effective. While trolling, the fisherman is seldom bothered by other fish, although an occasional Spanish mackerel, cavalli or grouper may strike at his bait. In his first wild leap the tarpon, as he feels the hook, usually throws it with the bait high in the air. If, instead, it catches in his bony mouth, the sportsman must keep a constant strain upon the line, through all the leaping, twisting, turning and sulking of the quarry. How difficult this is with a rod, so nearly springless and so short, is best known to the fisherman of most experience. Even when success seems assured, in the big passes and among the outer keys, a fourteen-foot shark is likely to take in half of your six-foot tarpon at a single bite.

In fighting the tarpon, the fisherman holds his left hand as high as convenient on the rod and throws his weight backward against it. Then throwing the tip of the rod forward he reels in the slackened line. The process is called pumping, and the fisherman's heart soon pumps with it. The tarpon which I have captured have required of me from ten minutes to three hours each, or an average of something over half an hour, of incessant toil, before they have yielded. For those who fish to kill, the boatman's skill with the gaff shortens the time. Much of the pleasure to me of tarpon fishing lies in giving freedom to the fish after his surrender. Even after he has given up and been drawn beside the boat he keeps up a powerful motion of his tail, and there is excitement in removing the hook from his mouth. Usually a quick motion of the hand will back out the hook, sometimes a small penknife blade must be used to free the barb, and once in ten times it will be necessary to use a stick or the handle of a paddle as a disgorging. It is a delicate operation which the tarpon is always likely to complicate. He is the slimiest thing in creation and can only be steadied for the work in his mouth by holding his jaw or inserting a few fingers in the outer edge of his gills. To put the hand in his gills would invite something worse than laceration. Yet I have removed the hooks from scores of tarpon, even in rough water, while holding them beside a tiny, cranky canoe, the sides of which rose only five inches above the water line. Of course in still-fishing the snood usually has to be



The joy of the first jump makes up for unrequited days of fishing.



He follows the tide in his wild rushes for freedom.

Tarpon Fishing

cut to free the tarpon which must then get rid of the hook as best he can.

Excitement is doubled when the hand line is substituted for the rod and reel windlass. The line should be one-sixteenth of an inch in thickness, of cotton loosely twisted, and the hands must be guarded by leather or canvas gloves. The mouth of the tarpon can be felt by the fisherman as, through the reins, the horseman feels that of the animal he drives. Each stroke of the tail or turn of the swaying body of the fish is telegraphed to the hand that holds the line. Even the emotions of the tarpon can be inferred from the angry shaking of his head, or its gentle yielding to the persuasion of the line. The hand line lends itself to work with the canoe and the camera. A light canoe, which a twenty-four thread tarpon line could sustain, suspended in the air, can be held by a light trolling line as near the big fish as the fisherman chooses. He may enjoy his drive at a safe distance from his fiery steed or he can invite the mix-up which it is easy to get. He ought never to try this in the sweeping tide of the big pass, no matter how much of a water dog he may be, without a friendly boat at hand. There is probably no danger from sharks, as these brutes apparently never attack living human beings in this country, yet after seeing the eagerness with which they gobble up tarpon from beside the boat, I have become conservative in acting upon my faith in their harmlessness. In less turbulent water than Boca Grande I have often seen the shark temper tested. In Marco,

women and children swim about the dock from which men are fishing for sharks, and more than once, while swimming there with my daughter, fifty feet from shore, I have seen a shark glide between us and the bank.

In hunting the tarpon the true sportsman's weapon is a light harpoon. The fisher with a hook is the trapper of the craft, who neither sets nor baits his own trap. But the harpooner of a tarpon has earned his laurels. There is no royal road in that business and no mercenary can carry you to success. Nothing that is done with rifle or fowling piece is more sportsman-like or calls for greater skill. The game is a lottery without blanks, for if you miss the tarpon with your harpoon, the joy of the pursuit, the excitement of the near approach and the delirium of the throw, though it fail, is greater than even the capture of the creature by trapping methods.

Leave your hired guide at home and go forth with your friend and companion, in the lightest canoe or skiff that will carry you, paddling or sculling one another by turns. Find and follow the bayonet fin of the tarpon as it cleaves the surface of the shallow waters of the feeding grounds; explore the deep rivers and look under the dark shadows of their banks for the sleeping silver king; or paddle out to the tide-rips in the big pass, to where a school of tarpon are rising to blow, at the rate of twenty a minute within the area of an acre. If you are gifted with your weapon and your companion skilled and cautious with the paddle, you may get half the fish you follow

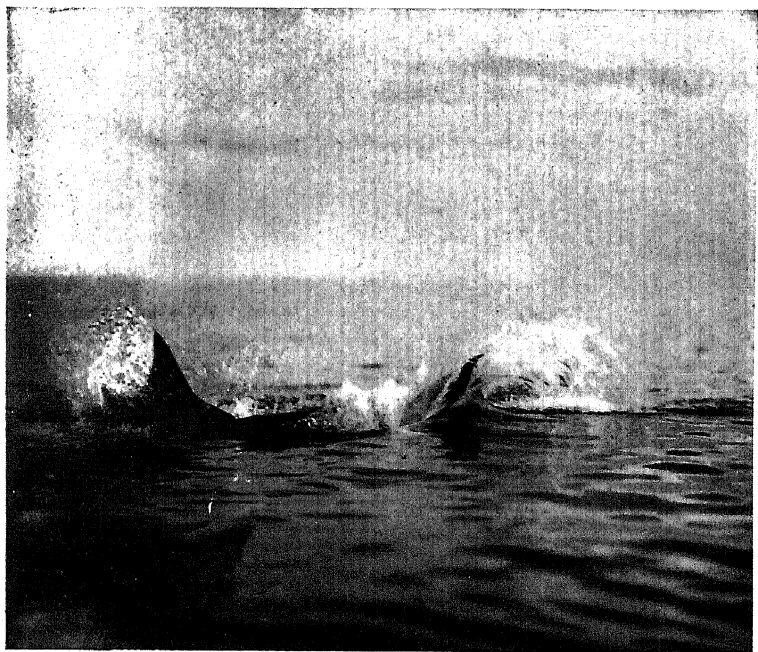
on the flats, one in five of those you see under the banks, and succeed in hitting one in a hundred that rise in the pass to blow, within twenty feet of you. The Camera-man says that the latter would be a good average for the camera as well. Even if you fail to find tarpon your time will not be wasted. On the flats, beautifully spotted whip-rays will attract you, big, vicious sharks tempt your steel and huge saw-fish tender you their four-foot weapons as trophies. The rivers will be found alive with fish of many kinds, the flora and fauna of the banks will lend interest to every minute, while in the big pass, if you fail to get the tarpon you seek, there is always the chance that he will capsize you and give you a story to tell at home—when you get there.

Would you reach the *Ultima Thule* of tarpon fishing and touch the very heart of the game? Then forget all that has been written here. Take your best girl out in a little canoe and don't bother with rod or reel but provide a trolling outfit, which is less tiresome to a fisherwoman and leaves one hand free. The lady should troll the lure—for the tarpon—about fifty feet behind the canoe, while you paddle silently, that not a whisper may be lost, through channels, up bayous, around and between islands and along shores lined with mangrove trees, from whose pendent branches hang great bunches of oysters begging to be eaten. Your course should lead through beautiful winding rivers, with banks covered with pine, cypress, live-oak, palmetto and red cedar; adorned with myrtle, mistletoe and thousands of air-

plants, and fragrant with magnolia and jessamine. From the trees hang festoons of gray Spanish moss and great cables of swinging vines. Less frequently you find wild orange, lime, mastic and tamarind trees, while an occasional royal palm lifts its magnificent head far above the forest which surrounds it. Rarest of all, a palmetto may be seen thrusting its slim, straight body upward through the hollow trunk of a wild fig tree, with its crested head twenty feet above the wide-spreading branches of the latter. As each bend in the river is passed, ducks rise from the water and snipe from the banks. Herons, great and small, flap their lazy wings. Night herons fly, squawking; pink Curlews flutter from the trees, snake-birds drop from the boughs into the water and clumsy pelicans wing their way, with intermittent stroke, to other waters. The sullen plunge of the alligator, disturbed in his siesta and his bed, is followed by the cautious lifting above the surface of the water of a pair of unwinking eyes which gravely gaze at you. Occasionally a quick step is heard, a startled deer stands in bold relief upon the bank for the instant preceding the toss of his white tail, which is the last you see of him. Just as you have forgotten that you are fishing, there will come a tug at the trailing line, a cry from the girl who holds it and, if it is your first tarpon, the most glorious sight you ever beheld, the wild leap of the radiant silver king. Thereafter, don't bother about rules, but just sit tight and enjoy yourself. Probably the girl will attend to playing the fish. Intuition or inheritance



The humane angler unhooks his adversary and lets him go his way.



A shark cuts the tarpon in two.

Tarpon Fishing

will tell her when to give him his head and when to bring him up with a round turn. She may know nothing of Izaak Walton, but it's a hundred to one that she's up in the methods of Simon Peter. If the first run of the tarpon threatens to carry away the whole line, you may have to brace up and paddle mightily toward the flying fish. When the early rushes are over and the tarpon settles down to business, the drag on the line is about equal to the pull against the bit of the average trotter. You can now ride quietly for miles behind the gorgeous creature that at irregular intervals leaps high in the air, or if you are greedy for excitement and the girl can swim, the canoe may be pulled close up to the tarpon and the excitement will come. When the leaping is finished and the tired fish rolls over on his back the canoe may be pulled beside him and after his length has been measured the hook should be taken from his jaw. If you desire a souvenir scale from your adversary, now is the time to take it. If you wish to record his weight, cube his length, in feet, divide by two and you have his weight in pounds. After a few minutes' rest the tarpon will swim slowly away, sometimes jumping once in the air by way of a farewell.

THE TARPON AND THE SHARK

CHAPTER XIII

THE TARPON AND THE SHARK

I SHIPPED for the v'y'ge, Cap'n and I'll stand by ye, but we're liable to land in Mexico!"

Big drops stood on the boatman's forehead as he struggled desperately with his paddle against the fleeing tarpon that was dragging us swiftly out to sea. In the smoothest water the gunwales of our cranky little canoe stood but five inches above the surface. Twice already, in fighting the big fish, I had nearly capsized the tiny craft and water had poured over its sides until we sat in a pool that reduced to three inches the barrier between us and the Gulf. For we were two miles off the coast, in the Gulf of Mexico, while to the eastward a heavy squall was building, marked by black masses of clouds capped by thunderheads and quite certain to strike us. It was the hurricane month and as the boatman fought with the paddle and I with the rod, neither of us needed to be told that we had no business to be outside of the pass.

I had struck the tarpon an hour before in Charlotte Harbor and after a number of brilliant preliminary leaps and a few quick runs in several directions that had threatened alike my equilibrium and my rod, he had dashed for the open Gulf through Big Gas-

parilla Pass. In the swift current of the ebbing tide he had his own way with us, although I gave my tarpon line a chance to make good its warranted strength of forty pounds and braced against my shoulder the heavy rod until it cracked, while my boatman paddled mightily for the shore. But the silver king swam swiftly and strongly with occasional joyous leaps, helped on by wind and tide, and always seaward, while the shore receded with every minute that passed.

When the boatman ceased paddling for a moment, to bail out some of the water in which he sat, the bow of the bubble boat swung around till it pointed to the fish. Then I reeled rapidly and seemed to be bringing in the tarpon, but it was the canoe that went out to him and the coast began to fade. Once I pulled too near and the frightened tarpon bumped against the canoe as he rose beside it and splashed a few more gallons of water over the low side of our craft. A family of dolphins swam lazily near us and as one of them rose to the surface between our canoe and our quarry I felt the blow of his tail against the taut tarpon line that I held. We passed a bunch of cavalli which spattered us as they leaped out of the water in eager chase of a school of smaller fry. Pelicans in our path rose clumsily and with curious intermittent flight winged their way to the now distant shore. The long, oily swell of a coming storm shut out the line of coast as we sunk in the hollows of a yet unruffled sea, while a rising bank of clouds in the southwest threatened to make

of our position a storm-center. The breeze from the east which had fought for the tarpon, against us, became fitful and at times yielded to an opposing gust. The coast line grew fainter, the water about us began to dance and the black cloud masses in the eastern sky took solid form as they rolled toward us, sending forth warning peals of thunder. I might have cut the line and begun the race for shore against the oncoming storm, had not the tarpon seemed to be weakening and by frequent changes in his course giving hope of his speedy surrender. As the canoe was again brought beside him he started seaward once more with apparently unimpaired strength and I had to face again my boatman's hint that Mexico was the next land on our course. I was sure that when the storm struck us we could cut loose from the tarpon and, with two paddles, could ride out anything less than a hurricane. But I was troubled about the sluggish little flat-bottomed skiff in which the Camera-man followed, which was intended only for smooth water and was now rowed by a confessed landlubber. As the Camera-man refused to turn shoreward without us, I said to my boatman:

"Captain, we've got to make that shore now, tarpon or no tarpon."

His somewhat eager assent was qualified by, "If we can!"

The Camera-man made the painter of the canoe fast to his skiff, took my paddle and with the two boatmen labored lustily with paddles and oars. My work with the rod was scarcely less strenuous. I put

upon the tackle all the strain it would bear, but from time to time lost line to the tarpon until nearly six hundred feet were out and not many turns left on the reel. Then came sudden relief as the fish dashed toward us, followed by the fear that he had broken loose. For I reeled in many yards feeling only the strain of the dragging line until I had half its length to the good, and was counting the game as lost when, within fifty feet of the canoe, the tarpon rose half a dozen feet in the air while a great splash in his wake told of his narrow escape from a tiger of the sea. His pursuer disappeared and I reeled in line until I again felt the pull of the fish which was now ahead of us and making for the shore, when there appeared, swimming silently beside the canoe, so near that I could have laid my hand upon him, quite the largest hammerhead shark I have ever had the fortune to meet. His length of over fifteen feet exceeded that of our craft, which seemed frail indeed beside the monster, and a glassy eye at the end of the three-foot bar across the brute's nose looked us coldly over. His back rose above the surface, his leg-o-mutton dorsal fin loomed beside us, the boatman stopped paddling and I held my breath as I thought how a single stroke of that powerful tail, followed by a few judicious bites, would dispose of canoe and contents, leaving no trace of either, excepting that the weight of a wandering tiger of the sea would have been increased about one-fifth. He swam higher than any shark I had ever seen and I held my rod idly with loosened reel waiting for the verdict, for it was plain

that the big brute had it in mind to attack us. I recalled with a shudder my scornful statements that sharks in these waters never attack human beings and wondered how my boatman felt about his airy offers to run any shark in the Gulf out of the country with a stick.

Long afterwards the memory of the cruel eye of that tarpon-devouring monster induced mutual admissions and, without wholly renouncing my faith, I conceded that it should be treated practically as an academic theory rather than a demonstrated fact. I know I gave a deep sigh of relief when a sweep of the hammerhead's tail sent him far in advance of us and we renewed our struggle for the shore. But my heart was in my mouth a few minutes later when the water beside us opened and a whip-ray, seven feet across his beautiful spotted back and wings, shot into the air above our heads and fell back into his element with a crash that could have been heard a mile, followed by the lament of the Camera-man, "Been waiting for that to happen for three years and now, instead of a camera, I've got this blamed paddle in my hands!" The tarpon gave no more trouble. He swam steadily, rolling above the surface at times, but holding his general course toward Gasparilla Pass and the beach. He was tractable, too, and followed the lead of the line with little resistance, until we reached the shallowing water north of the pass. He then awakened to new life and had made a number of quick dashes followed by wild leaps in the air before a big fin cutting

the water in his wake told that his ancient enemy was again on his trail. As the water was now less than waist deep I got out of the canoe and played my part in the game from a firm foothold, as I slowly worked the fish shoreward. As the water grew shoaler the pursuit of the hammerhead became fiercer, and everytime he dashed for his victim I had to give out line until more than a hundred yards of it was stretched between us. Again the shark disappeared until I had brought the tarpon within fifty feet of me, when he reappeared, his great bulk gliding easily beside the tarpon, whose every motion he followed like a shadow. As the weakening and distressed tarpon swam quietly his enemy, almost imperceptibly, drew nearer. In sudden panic the pursued fish jumped clear of the water several times and swimming for the shore was within fifteen feet of me when the pursuing shark, frightened by the shoal water dashed away, but returning in a wide curve swept resistlessly with wide-open mouth upon his victim. The leap of the doomed fish was feeble and late, the cruel jaws closed over him, for yards around the water was crimson, the tarpon was dead. As the great fin of the sea-tiger swept past, less than his length from me, the voice of the Camera-man, safe on the beach, came from behind me:

“Couldn’t you have stood a bit nearer? A little more human interest would have made that a bully picture.”

A few minutes after he had photographed the tarpon tragedy the Camera-man tied a rubber sheet

over the tools of his trade and we dragged the canoe and skiff up on the beach. A solid wall of rain was rushing from the east and soon the darkness of the storm swallowed us up. Big drops beat like hailstones upon us and from the driven deluge that followed we turned away our faces and gasped for breath. In half an hour the sky cleared as the storm was beaten back by a wind from the southwest. For a time the opposing currents seemed to neutralize each other and the water became unruffled, excepting as it was disturbed by a school of small fish that were playing near the shore. Then the wind from the southwest prevailed, bringing with it masses of heavy rolling clouds, forerun by hundreds of pelicans and gulls seeking food from the water and rest on the beach. The wind increased, became violent and grew into a gale, covering the Gulf with white caps and sending big waves rolling and breaking over the beach. As fishing was impossible while the storm lasted, we amused ourselves by launching the little canoe in the surf and paddling it out over the rollers. Getting into the canoe among the breakers was like mounting a bucking broncho, but after that, as a broncho buster in New Mexico once said to me:

“Anybody can ride, trouble is to get aboard.”

It was sport royal and without misadventure until having paddled safely through the breakers, I was caught in the trough of the sea while trying to turn the canoe, rolled over, smothered in foam and, after an exciting swim for the shore through turbulent water towing a wave-tossed canoe, was sent sprawl-

ing up on the beach with canoe and paddle tumbling about my body. The plate-holder of the Camera-man chanced to be empty at the instant of the incident and he lamented his misfortune loudly in ill-concealed hope that I would try it again.

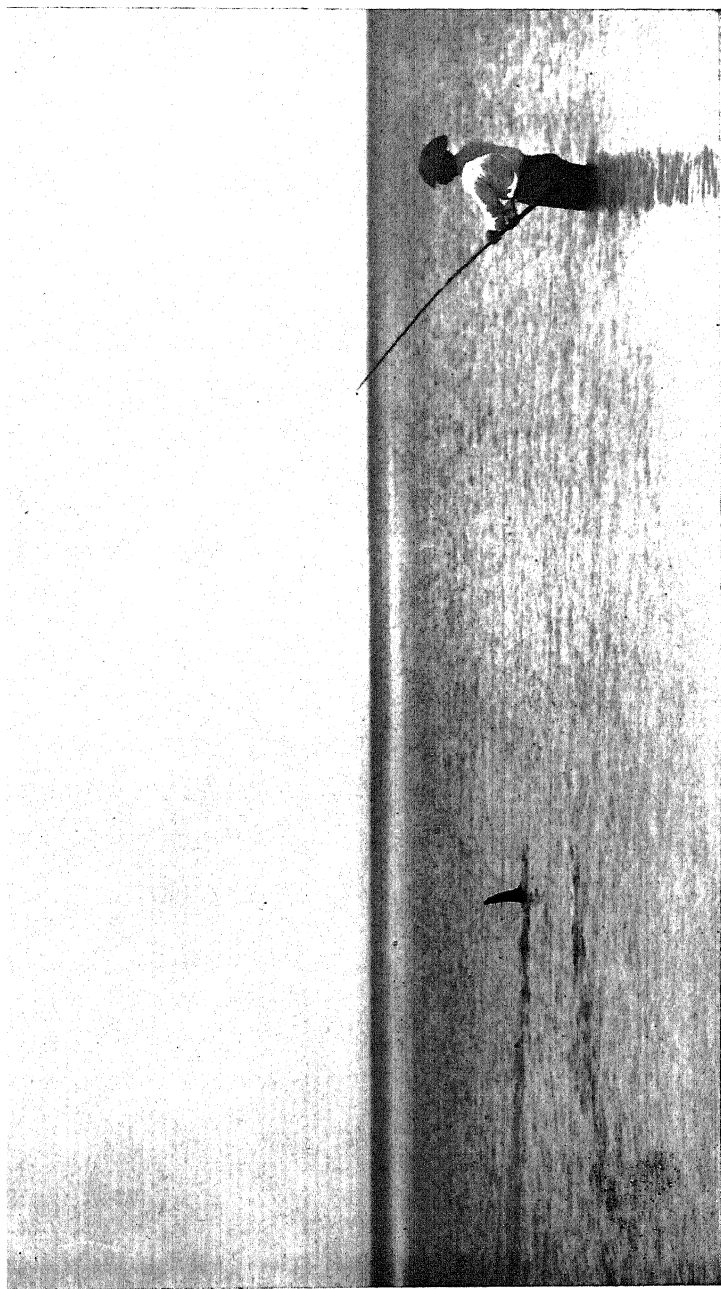
When the gale abated we sailed south to Boca Grande, the big pass, headquarters of the marine monsters of the coast. The channel here is ten fathoms deep, the pass a mile wide, the tide swift and the rough water abounds in possibilities and big fish. There were sharks that chased and killed our tarpon as I played them. When the sea was so rough that the crests of the waves spilled water over the low sides of the canoe, these brutes became most active and followed their prey and mine so fiercely as to threaten the destruction of our craft by collisions, often narrowly averted. Sometimes we saw beside our canoe the big, open, three-foot mouth of a devil-fish, sixteen feet across the back, with horn-like flippers on each side of his head—as harmless in his nature as he is devilish in appearance. Yet a playful touch of his great wings lifted half out of water and nearly capsized the skiff of the Camera-man who was following him too closely.

“What’s that?” exclaimed the boy who was rowing the skiff.

“Devil-fish!” replied the Camera-man.

“Hell! ! !” said the boy.

One morning a thousand-pound manatee rose beside the canoe, looked in my face and failing to recognize an old friend, dove hastily, sending, with a



The hammerhead's great bulk gliding easily behind the tarpon.

stroke of his thick tail, as is the custom of the creature when frightened, a column of water high in air. Dolphins rolled their backs above water where fish abounded, heads of great turtles, uplifted for air, dotted the surface and often rising beside the canoe disappeared suddenly with a gasp of surprise. Sluggish jewfish sometimes took our bait. If they chanced to be very small, we had jewfish chowder for supper, otherwise we let the big, ugly things go. We wasted no time on the horse-mackerel. Whenever a shark got on our hook we devoted hours, if necessary, to his extinction, although this compelled us to land on the beach to finish the brute. A prudent man doesn't pull a frail canoe beside a fighting-mad tiger of the sea. We slaughtered sharks because they killed other fish, and spared tarpon because——

In the big pass tarpon can best be caught from near the bottom of the channel and should be fished for with fifty feet of line and a heavy sinker. In shallow water the tarpon leaps high in air the instant he feels the hook, but in the pass he often fights for a minute or two before coming to the surface. More than once when I had come to fear that my tarpon was a shark, he has suddenly shot above the surface, like a bullet from a gun and in the first wild shake of his head thrown hook and bait fifty feet in the air, and one even sent a four-ounce leaden sinker flying over my head from nearly twice that distance. Other tarpon when struck came straight up from the bottom, one grazing our gunwale as he rose and another leaping over the stern of the canoe. As soon as a tarpon

was tired enough to let us pull the canoe beside him we removed the hook from his mouth and let him swim home to his family. It happened once that a tarpon was less tired than we had assumed. On that occasion *we* swam home and he had a good man-story to tell his friends that evening.

It had been counted a poor year for tarpon, yet in fifteen consecutive days of fishing we were fast to forty-four tarpon, each of which had jumped for us from one to twelve times. This high-water mark of twelve jumps was made by a tarpon which was stimulated to his later efforts by the presence of a pursuing shark and the twelfth jump was a double number. There was commotion in the crimsoned water, new vigor at the other end of my line, and it was an hour later when I finally landed on a sandbar a shark with an aldermanic stomach. A knife drawn across this distended organ disclosed the tarpon in sections with the hook still fast in his jaw and enabled the Camera-man to photograph together the subjects he had recently photographed separately. Although this shark was only one-fifth the size of our big hammer-head, yet he made but two bites of his victim.

Our work at Boca Grande ended with the red letter day of the season, of all seasons. I was fishing in the pass with fifty feet of line and the bait was directly under the canoe when a tarpon struck fiercely, quickly carried away a hundred more feet of line and then swam so swiftly toward us that I feared, from the loosened line, that he had escaped, when, fifty feet from the canoe, there shot into the



A knife drawn across the distended organ disclosed the tarpon in sections, with the hook still fast in his jaws.

air a giant tarpon, measuring, as we learned afterward, an even seven feet. Up! up! up! he rose, until the camera seemed to be pointed at the zenith and before the rattled Camera-man could get his aim the silver king had turned gracefully in the air and was plunging downward. The captain swears that he saw, swinging clear of the water, the ribbon which marked twenty-five feet on the line as it hung plumb down from the tarpon in the air.

Once I gave my own estimate of the height of the jump to a group of friends and after a glance at their grieved expressions, appealed to the one of most experience on the coast and with the tarpon. After a single moment of hesitation he remarked with firmness:

“We fishermen must stand together. I believe the story.”

A SQUARE DEAL

CHAPTER XIV

A SQUARE DEAL

EUREKA!" I shouted, but the cry was smothered in salt water, as the big tarpon pulled me over the capsized canoe and sent me upside down to the bottom of the bay. When I got back to the surface, with my head where it belonged, I wondered if the philosopher of the tub came as near drowning while making his discovery, so akin to mine. I had found how to rid the crowning sport of fishing of its alloy. That was my remedy: *Give the fish a square deal.*

The idea was not quite original, but its application was unusual. From the days of Izaak Walton, fishermen of gentle instincts have worked in this direction. Linus Yale, as perfect an angler as he was mechanician, loved to stop by the roadside and, with a few hairs from the tail of his horse, a tiny hook of his own delicate forging, a microscopic fly designed and made by himself, and a reed or tiny sapling for a rod, coax from his home in the mountain brook some patriarch of the stream, twenty times the weight of the improvised gear. I have seen Mr. Jefferson capture (I hate the word "kill") a twelve-pound salmon with an eight-ounce trout-rod, and to-day if you tell your tackle-man that you are going to

catch an eighteen-ounce trout and want him fitted with a rod, he will pass over the counter one that weighs three and three-fourths ounces.

But with little fish the cold fact remained that the contest was between one pound and a hundred. Writers often treated it as a Homeric combat, and even Warner's gentle satire failed to cure some of them. When bigger fish, like the tuna and the tarpon, were dealt with, there were assistants and machinery, and although the quarry might escape, it never had the chance to hit back. One author has written in sweeping denunciation of this unfairness, and though I sympathized with his humanitarianism, and might have welcomed with him a system which would have killed fewer fish and more fishermen, I yet thought his imagination perfervid when he pictured the fisherman as the "cold-blooded, cruel creature at the wrong end of the unfair line," and was reminded by the fisher with a camera of "a Roman painter who tortured a slave on the rack that he might paint a man's dying agony."

Then one day the Camera-man came to me with a solemn face and letters in his hand, from which he read:

"We can use it, but we had hoped for something more adventurous."

"Good stuff, but lacks human interest."

"Deficient in local color . . ."

We planned to compound a manuscript of equal parts of adventure, local color, human interest, and a square deal, and then hunt up facts and pictures to

fit the story. I agreed to be the human interest, if my constitution held out, and began by getting into the little Canadian canoe, fifteen feet long, twenty-six inches wide, and eleven inches deep, and trying to stand up in it. I stopped down a tiny harpoon until it could penetrate only one and a half inches and took it aboard with a light line and tub. The hunter-boy asked:

“Am I to go with you in the canoe, sir?”

“Yes.”

Then he went to his bunk, emptied his pockets, took off his shoes, and got into the canoe. The Camera-man was in his short little power boat, which would back, fill, and almost turn on its center at the motion of a hand.

I continued to practice standing upright, balancing myself with the harpoon-pole, while the boy sat as low down in the canoe as he could and paddled me out in the bay. The Camera-man zigzagged behind us, cheering me with offers to bet two to one on a capsize before a capture. He called my attention to the three tandem fins of a fifteen-foot sawfish gliding through the water near me, but preferring to be my own biographer I passed by on the other side. Chaffing stopped when we saw the bayonet fin of a tarpon cleaving the water a hundred yards ahead of us. As we approached each other there was nothing to fix the relation of hunter and hunted. The mien of the tarpon was at least as fierce as mine. His advance was swifter, straighter, his weight greater, and he would have overtopped me by a foot.

He bore slightly to the left, and I murmured to my boatman, in tones almost of anguish, "To the right, to the right!" for, being right-handed, to twist my body half around to the right and throw from that position spells "capsize" in big letters. But the boy sheered just enough to the right, and as the fish came on and distance diminished, slowed down and steadied the canoe, while the thrill of the coming crisis ran tingling through my veins, muscles hardened, and ceasing to take thought of my balance, I found it no longer needful, as foot by foot my eye measured the lessening distance between the canoe and that gleaming, oncoming, form. As the pole left my hand I felt the shot was a sure one, and the sudden dash of the fish toward me brought forth the exultant cry, "I knew it!"

The tarpon's first leap was high in the air beside the canoe and he whirled about as he plunged beneath the surface, dashing water over us and nearly capsizing the craft, in the bottom of which I was then kneeling. While getting under way and headed for him I lost many yards of line which I slowly recovered until the bow of the light canoe was close to his tail. When the Camera-man finally overtook us, the frightened fish swerved from his course, and as the power boat followed, the tarpon made circles around us, so near that I could not follow him without capsizing the canoe. Once more he made a straight-away dash for a long distance, leaping often in the air, then, turning, swam straight for the canoe, so suddenly that I could not gather in the line as he

came. He leaped from the water so near me that I could have touched him with my hand, rose above my head and then came a quick turn in the air, and the descent of the creature, head downward, brushing my side and striking fairly, with all his weight multiplied by a velocity which I have not yet figured out, upon the side of the canoe. The canoe melted away and left me kneeling in the water and my boatman sitting in the same element. He promptly swam to the power boat and climbed aboard, but I was committed to the human interest and the square deal.

The tarpon was swimming away, and the line, which I had not dropped, was running through my hands as a few strokes took me to the capsized canoe. I rested against its side, with my arms extended across the bottom, as I took in line which came up from the bottom of the bay in hanks, and tried to get it into the tub, to which one end was fastened, and which I kept floating before me as best I could. This work progressed intermittently, as the tarpon kept me occupied in other ways much of the time. It was during a special effort to control one of his rushes that I was hauled across the canoe and plunged head downward to the bottom by the rolling over of that craft. Things got tangled this time; I was mixed up with the line and had to swim around a good deal to straighten up. Finally I got into the submerged canoe, right side up, all comfortable, head and toes above water, tub between my knees and the game in my own hands. That was all right while the tar-

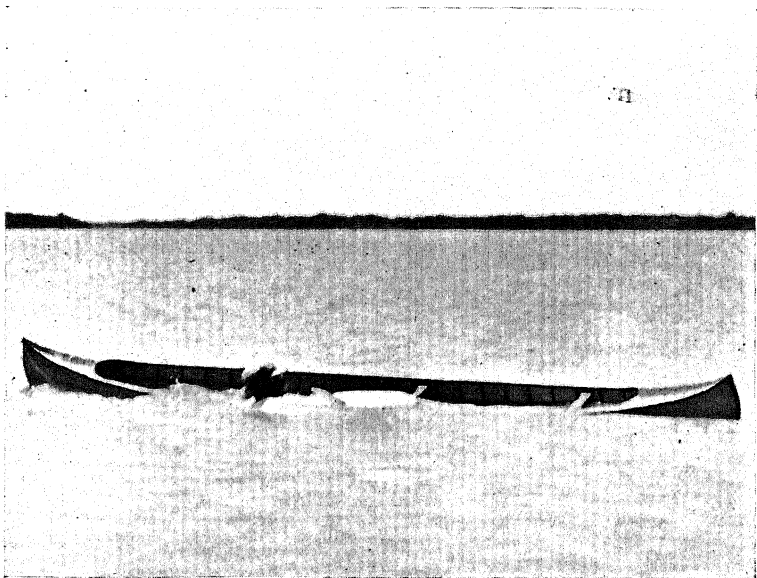
pon kept a straight course, but when he began to tack I was in trouble. The way that canoe rolled from side to side, pitched back and forth, and took headers wouldn't be believed.

Of course the tarpon jumped. He always jumps, and is the only big fish that really knows how. Other fish jump sometimes, but the tarpon makes it a matter of principle. He leaps out of water at the first prick of hook or harpoon, he leaps to catch the fish on which he feeds, and one unhooked tarpon jumped into the skiff, knocked my guide overboard, laid him up for a month, and very nearly sent him into the next world. His jumps are vertically upward, at any angle, in any direction, or he may skim the surface of the water. He can hold himself straight as an arrow, bent into a circle or the letter S, or tie himself into a bow-knot, and I never saw the leap of a salmon that the commonest kind of a tarpon couldn't double discount in his sleep. The performance of a tarpon is so picturesque, so thrilling, that to see it sportsmen travel thousands of miles, sit for days in little skiffs, and then grind fifty-dollar coffee-mills on springless rods for hours at a time.

I wanted the tarpon to jump over the canoe, and to that end hung on and tugged till we were so near together that he struck the canoe on its side and rolled it over; and as I came up on one side of it, his tail, lifted well in air, banged against the other side. It was a joyous moment; nothing could have added to my happiness but the presence of the author who wrote of the cruel control of "the wrong end of the



I got into the submerged canoe, right side up, with the game in my hands.



The tarpon slid into it of his own accord, which I accepted as a formal surrender.

unfair line." I would have given him his choice of ends; he could have run with the hare or hunted with the hound, if he could have made up his mind which was which. "The combat deepened"; sometimes I was in the canoe, and at others I was not. The Camera-man's plates were "'most gone," and the fight was now at short range. Whenever I hauled the fish into the canoe, it rolled over with both of us, until after one such capsize, as I was righting it, the tarpon slid into it of his own motion, which I accepted as a formal surrender, and, with a sudden jerk of the lightly fastened harpoon, set him free, just as the last plate was exposed.

I had discovered a new sport which thrills from its alpha to its omega. Whether one stands balancing on his feet, or kneels paddling in his canoe, the whole hunt is filled with charm. Overhead, wonderful pictures are painted, most often when the fishing season is best, of quick-gathering cloud masses, sometimes sending back fingers earthward to invite great whirling waterspouts, sometimes bursting into tropical rainstorms, which suddenly melt away, leaving the sky filled with mountains of snowy clouds bordered by the richest colors of the spectrum, and backgrounded by the pure blue of the heavens. There, too, are the waters and the life in them, more varied than the tourist dreams, picturesque streams; wooded shores and the life thereon; birds of many kinds on the ground, in the trees, wading, and eternally on the wing; the startled deer with big eyes following your every move, otters playing as they slide down

the banks, big turtles and alligators, and, crowning it all, the gleaming sides of the royal fish, carved in silver, but charged with dynamite. Then, throwing the harpoon! No other act of fishing compares with it in the skill involved or the thrill evolved. With the average sportsman, after a fair amount of practice, the odds are half a dozen to one against his hitting the fish, and the chances are even that he will go into the water oftener than a tarpon will come out.

Playing the fish is another delight, not a struggle to destroy him, but to stimulate him to make those gorgeous acrobatic displays which are without a parallel in the animal world. Then turn him loose. The injury to the fish is usually less than that which an average football-player would ignore in the glory of the game and count as trifling afterward.

I would like to suggest to the critic, who still thinks the contest too unequal, that he substitute the stable skiff for the cranky canoe, take the button from his foil and with his sharpest harpoon, backed by six feet of chain and a hundred of half-inch manila, follow that black fin that is lifted a foot or more above the surface of the water, as its owner glides stealthily in search of a victim. When he finds himself beside a murderous machine with a big mouth furnished with rows of serrated, introverted teeth, with head and tail overlapping respectively the bow and stern of his skiff, he can strike freely with the full assurance that the next minute will dispel all his fears of inadequate resistance to his attack. Or if

he will throw his iron into that other member of the family of sharks, so smoothly gliding beneath his skiff, and hang on to the line till a four-foot weapon, four inches broad, wielded by half a ton of angry adversary, is broken across his craft, he will admit yet other possibilities of fairness in fishing with a harpoon.

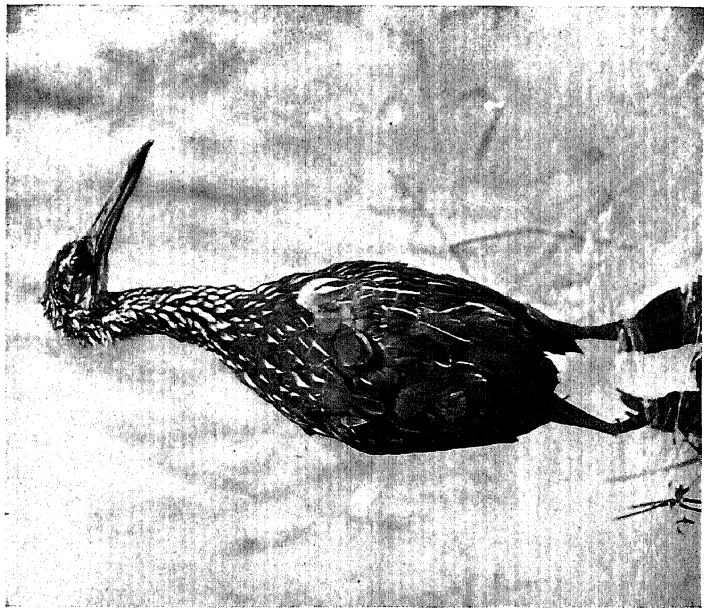
Sometimes it does happen that by accident you kill a fish, but the sharks will destroy a hundred before that accident will happen twice to you. I cannot agree with the author who believes the art of the angler "the refinement of cruelty," nor would I wholly subscribe to the views of that other fanatic who thinks that fish dying in air perish from an excess of oxygen and pass away in a glorious delirium of intoxication. My own belief, based on observation of facts too numerous to be cited here, is on all fours with that of a learned doctor of metropolitan distinction who assures me that fish do not suffer pain as we understand it, that their apparent manifestations of suffering are about as significant as the shrinking of a sensitive plant. I may add that I never saw any action in any fish that indicated half the agony suggested by a hustling hen as she hiked over the fence when chased out of the family flower-garden. There is plenty of real trouble in the world, and it is not well to magnify the sorrows of these cold-blooded victims, to the extent of getting your moral lens out of focus. Hunting the tarpon with a harpoon, under the conditions I have endeavored to set forth, is the very acme of sport. No man with

red blood in his veins can resist its attractions if he once gets within its field of influence. Of all sports it is first in legitimate pleasurable excitement, fullest of thrills, unequaled in healthfulness, and the only sport that gives the dumb object of pursuit a square deal.



Rarest and most beautiful were the long whites.

LIFE IN A BIRD ROOKERY



In the Glades, behind the rookery, were young limpkins.



Near the entrance to our estate, lived our friends, the pelicans.

CHAPTER XV

LIFE IN A BIRD ROOKERY

WE were spending a week on our estate, on the loveliest river of the Ten Thousand Islands, which we owned, from its bonneted head up among the white lilies of the Everglades, down through the labyrinthic bay that unites its two sections, to its mouth on the Gulf, which is so modestly hidden from the world outside by a tiny key.

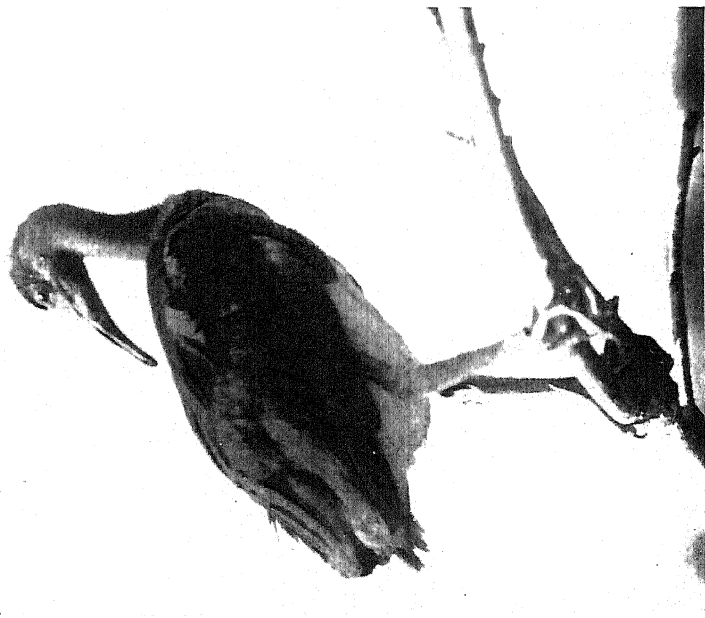
We held it by no crude parchment title, warranting trouble about taxes, timber thieves, squatters and questions of drainage. Our rights were the natural ones of acquaintance, appreciation and possession. No chart of the government, railroad map, or steamship folder ever came nearer than a bad guess at the extent or course of our river and you could count on the fingers of one hand the white men who could find their way to its source, even if placed within its mouth. No one else knows the local names, or the where and why of Little Tussock, Tussock Bay, Otter Point, The Meadows, Lime Camp, Tarpon Pool, Manatee Cove, or even The Nursery, where we spent that week, among fifteen thousand nests of squawking infants. When the anchor chain of our boat ran out beside the rookery, the air was filled with a snow squall of frightened birds. As the stern

of the boat swung within fifty feet of the bank, where branches of sweet bay, myrtle, custard-apple and mangrove, were breaking beneath the weight of birds and nests, there was another flight, but the birds soon returned to their homes and when, a few days later, we wanted to photograph the birds in the air we couldn't frighten them from their nests. A single shot would have created a panic, but during our stay not a grain of powder was burned on the river and upon this foundation rested the purpose and pleasure of our visit.

We lived upon our boat, sleeping on the cabin roof under the stars, soothed to slumber each night by the composite *chack, chack, chack*, resulting from the mingled cries of thousands of birds of many species. The note changed at dawn, when the colony awoke to the duties of the day, and from every home the breadwinners departed, with little farewell endearments that were intensely human, and set forth by twos, threes, dozens and scores, the white ibis for the shrimps and fiddlers which his family prefers, the little blue heron for frogs, the big white for minnows and the snake bird for the bream and perch which it regurgitates in chunks so big that it strains the rubber necks of its progeny to dispose of them. This unpleasant method of transfer becomes so instinctive in the young birds of a rookery, that when enemies threaten their nests they resort to it in surrender of their possessions, as promptly as the passenger in a stage coach empties his pocket in the presence of a road agent.



Madame Curlew keeping house.



Young Curlew, brown in his first year.

At night we watched the growing specks on the horizon as they became flocks of birds returning from the Glades, the Gulf, the bays and rivers, within a radius of thirty miles. When the home of a returning bird was near us, we could hear and almost understand the expressive inflections of the family conversation. Sometimes a bird returned with low-hanging broken leg and we sorrowed at the thought of his days of suffering before the over-lapped bones would knit firmly in response to Nature's surgery.

Once a parent bird reached his home in the nest nearest us, flying heavily and so sorely stricken that he could scarcely cling to a branch beside the nest. The tones from that nest that night were mournful ones and when in a few minutes the dying bird fell from the branch to the ground I wondered, with sorrowful apprehensions, if I had ever been responsible for a tragedy like that. Day after day we paddled our canoe in the little sloughs around and through the rookery and each day the birds grew tamer. The Camera-man waded and climbed trees, cut poles and made long legs for his camera, until he got the views he wanted of eggs and young birds, while the mother birds fussed around him and scolded at first, but sometimes came back to their nests before the work was finished.

Nature worked daily miracles with these young birds. One day they were egg-shaped parchment pouches, stuffed by their parents with lumps of dead fish, and in a few hours by processes so rapid as to be almost visible, they had converted the offensive mass

into living flesh and feathers, and in a few days evolved form and beauty from a chaos of corruption.

When the Camera-man wanted young birds that had graduated from their nests, they had to be chased through the swamp and followed up the trees, and our hunter-boy went up the latter like a squirrel and thrashed through mud and water like an otter, sometimes for a long distance, but he always brought back his bird, even if he had to cross deep sloughs to get him. He taught the birds he caught to pose, by petting them and putting them on the branches chosen by the Camera-man, and when they scrambled away, by catching them again, scolding them, folding their heads under their wings, patting, petting and putting them back on the branches.

The system never failed at the time, but when afterward we paddled among the nests certain vociferous young birds scrambled in haste from their homes to the tops of the tallest trees, and curlew matrons croaked from their nests:

“Johnny can’t pose to-day; he isn’t feeling well.”

Birds too young to get away were very friendly and from many nests our approach was hailed with cries of welcome and mouths were opened wide for the fish and frogs that often went with us. Mother birds, too, grew unfearful and as we fed their babies looked on with complacency, if not gratitude. One snake bird, or water turkey, which on our first call dropped from her nest into the water in the clumsy fashion of her species, on our later visits simply stepped aside and viewed with approval our per-



The young water turkeys were like blubbery, cream-colored goslings.

formance of her duty. Her two youngsters used to stand on the extreme edge of the nest, with wide open bills extended for the delicacies we brought them, until one of them fell into the water and when we tried to rescue him gave a full-grown exhibition of aquatic skill which was his inheritance. That night he disappeared and we thought we knew the hawk that got him, but couldn't afford to destroy with a gun the confidence of our feathered cronies, even to avenge one of them.

We were often sorely tempted in this direction. A hundred crows cawed from near-by trees and when a nest was left unguarded a crow plunged swiftly down and flew away with an egg impaled upon his bill. I couldn't shoot the wretches at the time, but rejoice to remember that I murdered a few of their family subsequently, which, considering all things, was mighty illogical but "some comforting."

It was a sociable colony and a curved-bill white ibis, locally called curlew, in a nest near us, used to talk to me in the most confidential way. Her voice was as ugly as she was beautiful and when her little family chipped in I could never tell whether they were trying to whistle or shriek. I have heard that ibis matron, by her inflection of the final vowel of the single syllable, "Qua," convey connubial expressions of endearment, express maternal affection, and say "*Scat!*" to an encroaching youngster from another nest as she took him by his neck and chucked him overboard. I tried to learn her language because I wanted to ask her why all her babies were

black, while she was pure white. The phenomena were so common that she couldn't have taken umbrage at the question, for the children of the little blue herons are all white and the progeny of the slim, black, snake bird are blubbery, cream-colored goslings in appearance. The "Qua Qua" of the heron could also be so varied in respect to the accent on the "a" that an educated member of that family could thereby announce his species to outsiders or maintain conversation at home.

We had little chance here to study the egret or long white. The plume hunters had visited the rookery before us and of fifteen thousand nests not fifteen were occupied by these birds. I trust no reader of this article will wear the plume of the young long white, whose photograph is used to illustrate it.

Two hundred yards from our boat, through a narrow slough, could be seen a submerged meadow, the beginning of the Everglades, over which we pushed our canoe to the near-by keys and saw birds and nests of other species. It was here that our hunter-boy pointed out to me a hawk, black and short of body, with some white marking about the tail, saying "There goes fifteen dollars," and looked reproachful when I shook my head. We ran down a pair of young limpkins, or bitterns, in the Everglades, by superior tactics and the judicious combination of a canoe and three pairs of legs. While the hunter-boy was supervising their artistic education and persuading them to pose, the mother limpkin fluttered around with the same kind of broken wing that



Baby Blues, one egg yet unhatched.



Baby Blues, a few days old.

afflicts the ruffed grouse when she believes her brood in danger.

The nursery had its visitors from the outside world. The fork-tailed kite, the most graceful of birds, swooped down and around in friendly fashion, scooping in an occasional tree frog from a high branch without change of speed in its flight. Of nearly equal grace, the man-of-war hawk, with royal dignity, floating high in air, sometimes circled slowly above the rookery in great numbers as if warning the colony of the storm which their high soaring presaged.

The busy little bee bird, the king bird of the North, and the shrill trill of the kingfisher, repeated with each flight, carried my thoughts to the North Woods, and as I heard the evening cry of a chuck-Will's-widow, I wished he could get a competent Northern whip-poor-will to teach him to talk.

There were visitors, too, of ill omen, owls among the thickest leaves, estimating with their big eyes the fatness of the baby birds and black buzzards on hand for mischances of any sort, either to the bipeds with feathers or to those without.

Tarpon leaped in the water around us; sometimes the round head of a wary otter appeared on its surface, with its bright eyes regarding us distrustfully; turtles were always in evidence and alligators floated near, with one grave eye fixed suspiciously upon the intrusive craft and the other longingly directed upon choice morsels in near-by nests.

Once there shot past us a long Indian canoe, with

an erect, bare-legged shirt-waisted Seminole at each end, poling rapidly, with eyes fixed straight ahead, but absorbing every detail of our outfit. In the middle of the canoe sat a squaw with a dozen pounds of beads on her neck, partly compensated for by lack of costume elsewhere, holding a squab of a papoose, which turned beady eyes wonderingly upon us.

The fly in our ointment was the need of keeping to windward of our wards. In other respects the week of our residence in the nursery was of unalloyed pleasure. There were events worth recording in every waking hour and minor incidents of interest filled up the minutes. Yet I now look back upon that bustling colony of beautiful birds with the painful knowledge that it is doomed. The tourist-with-a-gun will destroy what the plume hunter has left. Fathers, seeking to educate their sons along manly lines, will continue to provide them with cruising outfits and automatic weapons for the murder of innocents. I am happy to be able to quote from a splendid exception who presented his son with a rifle and said to him: "Don't shoot anything from your boat, and never kill a bird not recognized as game. Go out in the woods and earn the right to shoot a deer, bear, or panther, by first finding him and then if you kill him I'll be proud of you."

The network of rivers, chains of lakes, beautiful Everglades and ten times Ten Thousand Islands of Southern Florida, will be all-the-year playgrounds of the coming generation. Their most conspicuous charm, which has departed, might be restored if the



Baby Blues, ready to leave the nest.

birds of Florida could secure the same protection as the beasts of the Yellowstone National Park.

Within my own recollection of the west coast of Florida alligators slept upon the banks of every river, great white and blue wading birds stalked across every flat, solid acres of waterfowl covered the bays and streams, the trees were burdened and the skies darkened by great flocks of birds of gorgeous plumage and by others of the purest white, the most beautiful of created creatures.

There is just one power that can bring back the glory of that lotus land: restock its waters and people again its forests for the education and enjoyment of the whole people, to whom it belongs. That power is an active public sentiment. And public sentiment in the concrete means YOU.



Baby Blue, old enough to fare for himself.



Louisianas on a small mangrove.

**CROSSING THE EVERGLADES IN A
POWER BOAT**

CHAPTER XVI

CROSSING THE EVERGLADES IN A POWER BOAT

THREE days, me think so," said Tommy Osceola, when asked how quickly he could cross the Glades to Miami in his canoe; but he only shook his head negatively when I inquired how long it would take a white man. The Camera-man and I had decided on the trip, and I asked Tommy if he would go with us, when the trader chipped in:

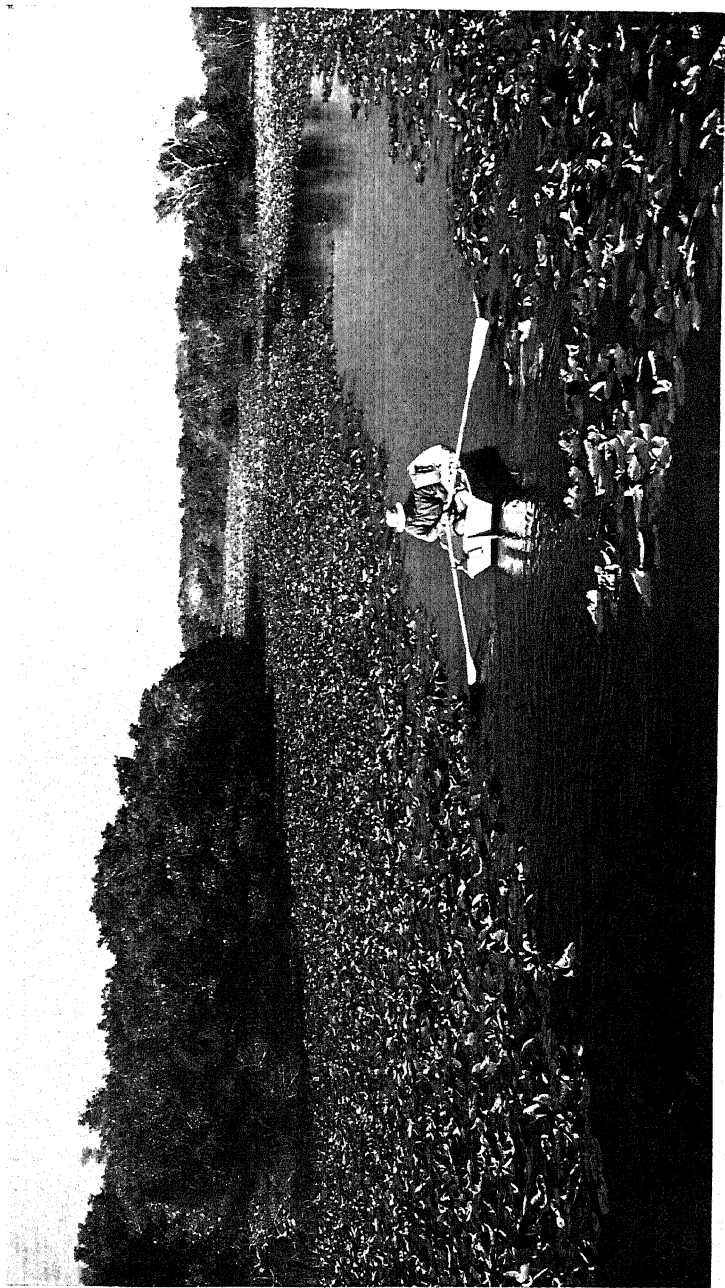
"What do you want of a guide? Don't you know where the sun rises?"

We fell in at once with the enchanting suggestion of our Florida friend, and invited him to join us in crossing the Everglades, with no other guide than a compass, to which he nodded instant acceptance. We arranged to take the two boys from our cruising-boat, and with launch, skiff, and little Canadian canoe go down to Osceola's camp in the Ten Thousand Islands. There we would borrow an Indian canoe for the trip, leaving the launch and skiff with the Indians until our return. As we were about to start, the sand of our sailor-boy ran out, and, in the language of the hunter-boy, he "skipped his job"; but his place was quickly taken by an older

sailor, who had cruised and hunted with us in former years. As our purpose was really to cross the Everglades, we dispensed with such conventional obstacles as tent equipments, prepared foods, medical and surgical outfits, and big armaments, and told our hunter-boy, who bossed the galley, to put up a spoon, cup, fork, and plate for each of us; to take a coffee-pot and frying pan, and pack enough bacon, corn-meal and coffee to feed us for a week. An old single-barreled shotgun, which we took along on the chance that we might get bird-hungry, was found convenient to blow off the heads of venomous snakes, but was not used otherwise. Each of us had a blanket, mosquito-bar, and rubber sheet, and, generally speaking, a change of underclothing.

As getting some real pictures was part of the project, we were liberal with the Camera-man, and he filled what space was left in the canoe with two big cameras, plate holders, and heavy boxes of $6\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ glass plates. The population of Everglade, consisting of our friend's family, turned out to witness the departure of the flotilla in tow of the power boat, in which the captain held the tiller ropes, while the Camera-man acted as engineer. The skiff, which was next in line, contained the Florida man, the writer, poles, provisions, and our personal bundles, while stretched out at full length on top of the loaded canoe our hunter-boy enjoyed his *otium cum dignitate*.

Our course lay among the Ten Thousand Islands, through Chokoloskee Bay, Turner's River, and Bays Sunday, Huston, and Chevalier. We camped on a



Harney's River. The heads of the rivers are choked with "bonnets," a sort of water lily.

plantation which bore the name of the last, but had been recently abandoned by its late owner, who had gone to a country where the titles to property are clearer than in the unsurveyed Ten Thousand Islands. We respected the padlock on the door of the house and lay on the ground in front of it, where my slumbers were undisturbed until dawn, when a sociable possum sought to share my bar. We here added to our stores by gathering a few avocado pears, a bunch of bananas, some stalks of sugar cane, a few sweet potatoes, and a lot of guavas.

Some plantations in the Ten Thousand Islands have their private graveyards, but all have histories, and as we continued our placid voyage my companion told me of the one we had left, which was known by the name of its founder. He was a harmless individual who once weakly consented to join two of his associates, whose names have been too numerous to mention, in arresting his nearest neighbor, one Wilson, upon a bogus warrant. Arresting Wilson upon a genuine warrant had long been recognized as a form of suicide, and it is believed that nervousness arising from his acquaintance with the man induced the leader of the trio to begin the service of the warrant at long range. The return shot neatly shaved off one side of his mustache, and he fled, followed by his fellow conspirators. Mr. Wilson chased them as far as Cape Sable in his boat and is believed to be still on the lookout for their return. He is said to wax indignant at the suggestion that his course was justified by the bogus character of the warrant, and

insists that his action was quite uninfluenced by that feature of the case. The ringleader must have experienced a change of heart, since Lieutenant Willoughby, who employed him as a guide despite his reputation as a bad man, writes of him in his "Across the Everglades," that he often sat up an hour beyond his usual time that he might tuck the lieutenant in bed before retiring.

Early in the day we entered a narrow creek completely covered by branches of trees that interlaced overhead, and so crooked that the power boat at the head and the canoe at the foot of our procession were usually traveling in different directions. During two miles of snakelike progress to Alligator Bay, dragging over roots, pulling under branches, smashing an occasional wasps' nest and striking at impertinent moccasins, we saw more varieties of orchids than I have found in a single locality elsewhere, including specimens colorless and full of color, scentless and filled with odor that made the surrounding air heavy with their fragrance; some garbed somberly as a Quakeress, and others costumed to rival a Queen of Sheba.

On one of the keys of Alligator Bay is the principal plume-bird rookery left in Florida. It had been shot a few days before our visit and twelve hundred dollars' worth of plumes taken. The mother birds had been shot, the young birds had starved.

Of important rookeries, this is one of the least accessible, and birds nest here when driven from others. If a trustworthy warden could be found and



A view of the Glades from a tree top—water, grass and trees everywhere.

kept alive here for six months in each year, a long step would be taken toward perpetuating two or three species of the most beautiful of birds, now far along on the road to extinction. Probably two wardens would be better than one for the sake of preserving their species also from extinction in this land, where the Court of Appeals is a shotgun. In continuing our cruise eastward we cut our way through two miles of an even crookeder creek, across which many trees had been felled by plume-hunters from north of the rookery, who sought thus to block the road of their rivals from south of the bay, or of a possible wandering game warden.

A few more miles of navigation through creeks, lakes, rivers, and among keys brought us to Possum Key, with the area of a good-sized room, where for many months an escaped convict lived with his family, while officers of the law sought far and wide for him with varying degrees of diligence. At Onion Key—a Lossmans River landmark—we gathered and ate wild grapes and figs while coffee was being made for our luncheon. The afternoon was spent exploring in the Glades the many trails leading from what we thought was Rocky Creek, vainly looking for signs of the Indian camp of which we were in search. When night came we were miles from the nearest camping-ground we knew, and our choice seemed to lie between sleeping in our boats or searching through the blackness of the night for a bit of dry land that might not exist. At this crisis the captain remembered having seen near the river some

banana plants, indicating the presence of land above the water. We waded to the place, and by beating down high grass and weeds made room to spread our blankets and stretch our bars. In carrying the baggage to camp we groped our way fifty yards through a thicket and waded in the mud half leg-deep.

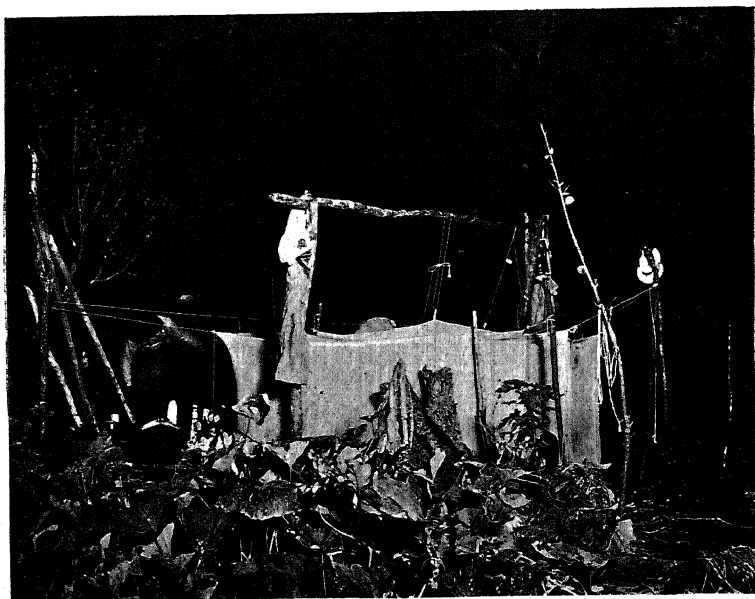
I was glad that the moccasin I stepped on turned out to be a bullfrog, and that the crawling things that got under my bar didn't prove venomous. A family of rats running around and under us disturbed our slumbers during the night, and when one woke me up by prolonged squeaking near my ear I hoped a snake had got him and that I would get the snake in the morning. We held a council of war beneath our bars, definitely abandoned search for the Indian camp, and decided to tote the power boat all the way to Miami.

In the morning, by channels which our manatee hunt had made familiar, we found the head of Rodger's River, and descending to its mouth, sailed three miles down the coast to the mouth of Harney River. Miami now lay sixty-five miles east-northeast of us. Twelve miles of this were made easy by the river and an intermediate bay, for of them we knew every fork, bight, bunch of grass, and island; and as the sun set and a few acres of bonnet stopped the motor, we were within a quarter of a mile of the Glades and half that distance of a beautiful Indian camping-ground surrounded by lime and lemon trees.

The approach to this site was overgrown, and when my Florida friend and I reached it, after wading



Now and then we poled through strands of sawgrass.



Where we camped for the night.

through knee-deep water among weeds that grew far above our heads, we found it occupied by a big rattlesnake which was much alive and very musical. While keeping the reptile at bay with oars, waiting for the shotgun which the Camera-man was bringing us, we estimated his length, in the hope that he would prove worthy of being captured alive for the Zoo in New York. Big as he was, he failed to qualify for that honor, and we blew his head to pieces. His mate could be heard rattling in the near-by thicket, but this was so dense and so filled with the thorny branches of the untrimmed lime-trees that we didn't trouble her. I was sorry afterward, when the darkness of the night brought to my memory gruesome tales of venomous serpents following the trail of the bodies of their mates, dragged with murderous purpose across the beds of innocent victims, and reflected that one of my hips was resting in the hole in the earth which the shot from my gun had made as it slew one of the pair. In the morning we gathered from the ground a bushel of limes, to correct, if necessary, the lime water of the Glades, and as we added them to our stores I thought with disrespect of the widow's cruse, which only maintained its original supply, while under our system each day doubled it.

Here our real journey began. We looked out upon the Everglades, and innocent enough they appeared. Miami was fifty-three miles east-northeast of us as the crow flies. But we were not crows. The only record of crossing the Glades at this point which

I had seen was by Lieutenant Willoughby, and he had treated the subject with much seriousness. But the lieutenant was burdened with official responsibility, a cargo of scientific machinery, a heavy armament, and a weight of ammunition that suggested provision for another Seminole war.

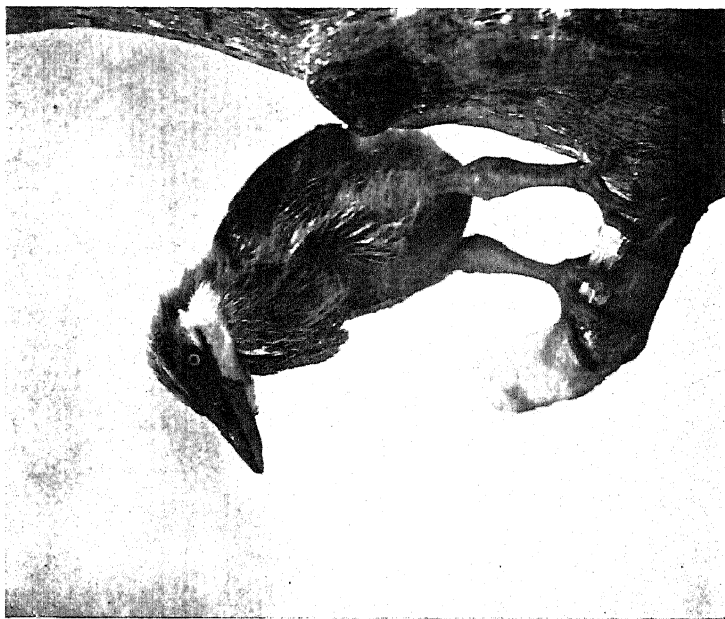
In 1883 the *Times Democrat* sent an expedition through to Okeechobee from Harney River, but I had not seen its report.

In 1892 one of the chief officials of the East Coast Railway, with an engineer and twenty men, conducted a *de luxe* surveying expedition from Fort Myers to Miami. Unfortunately the surveying portion of the work had to be suspended because of unexpected obstacles and privations, even the leaders of the expedition having been compelled, it was stated, to sleep in wet clothing.

We endeavored to feel impressed as we plunged into this mysterious region. But the motor boat towed us gaily along in bright sunlight through channels of clear-flowing water, among beautiful keys, over meadows covered with the big white-petaled, pink-tinged pond lily of my New England memory. Sometimes strands of heavy saw-grass drove us north, or shoaling water forced us to the east, but we kept a running account of our digressions, and compensated for them as we found opportunity. We lunched on a key of cocoa-plums, myrtle, and sweet bay, where we found about a square foot of earth for a campfire. I sat on a log, with my feet in the water, exchanging glances with a



Our camp on an Indian farm.



A young Evergladite.

water-moccasin coiled on a root within six feet of me, as I ate my lunch.

It became more and more difficult to keep the propeller free from grass, and we finally gave up its use almost entirely and worked steadily, pushing with oars and poles. The best of these poles, which had been obtained from an Indian, had a wooden foot formed like a lady's shoe with a French or cowboy heel. The heel held on the coral rock, which is never far from the surface in the Glades, and the foot sunk but little in the soft ground and heavy grass.

That night we found no key with land enough for a campfire, but the boy managed to heat some coffee on a pile of brush, and we slept in our boats. It was not convenient to rig our mosquito bars, and we dispensed with them, as we found the pests so scarce in the Glades as to be hardly worth considering. The captain curled up in the motor boat; the Camera-man slept on oars laid across its gunwales; our Florida friend and I were comfortable in the bottom of our skiff, where the croaking of frogs had just soothed me to sleep when a tropical thunderstorm burst upon us and half drowned us before we could get up. The hunter-boy had shown woodcraft by stretching his bar among the trees and piling up branches enough to keep him out of the water beneath him, while the canvas top of his mosquito bar measurably protected him from the torrent from above, and if the disturbance awakened him, he gave no evidence of it. When the storm had

gone by, my companion said he wanted to be dry once more, and put on his extra undergarments. Before he was fairly in them the black clouds came back and it rained worse than before.

The next day we were in the water a good deal. The motor boat had to be pushed and hauled. The open water, which we followed when possible, often led so far from our course that we had to drag our boats over water that was shoal and through grass that tugged against us. During this day our work was hard as that of pleasure seekers in the North Woods or campers among the Canadian lakes and rivers. A bit of dry land was secured for a mid-day camp by blowing the head off of a cotton-mouth moccasin which had pre-empted it. We discovered in the afternoon a beautiful camping-ground of Indian antecedents, half an acre in extent, dry, level as a floor, covered with pawpaws and fringed with wild grapes and cocoa plums. Piles of shells of turtle and snail, bones of deer, and remnants of fish told how life might be maintained in the Glades. That afternoon our course was guided by the dead top of a tall mastic tree at the foot of which was an Indian camp with the fire still burning.

We camped beside it among pumpkin vines, and ate roasted taniers and pumpkins which we gathered from the little field, where grew oranges, bananas, corn and sugar cane. The song of birds awakened me in the morning, and I recognized cardinal, king, and mocking birds, and saw one horned owl, several black hawks, and many crows. There was a greater

variety of trees and higher land than we had seen since leaving the west coast. From the top of the mastic tree a fringe of pines could be seen to the east, and I fancied once that I heard the whistle of a locomotive.

Soon after starting we saw the smoke of Miami factories and an occasional Indian in the distance. The water grew shoal as we worked toward the coast, and the iron shoe of our launch continually pounded the upthrusting pillars of coral. We turned back often for little distances, and pushed and pulled the power boat for hours, stumbling along the uneven, rock-based, grass-covered formation. We tried to lunch on a promising bit of ground on a small key, but finally yielded possession to a few million big ants who seemed to possess some squatter interest in the property. In the afternoon we met an Indian, who was spearing turtle and fish with much skill. He told us that his village was "three miles," and although it was off our course we invited ourselves to visit it; and as the water and grass permitted, towed the whole outfit, including the Indian and his canoe, with the motor boat.

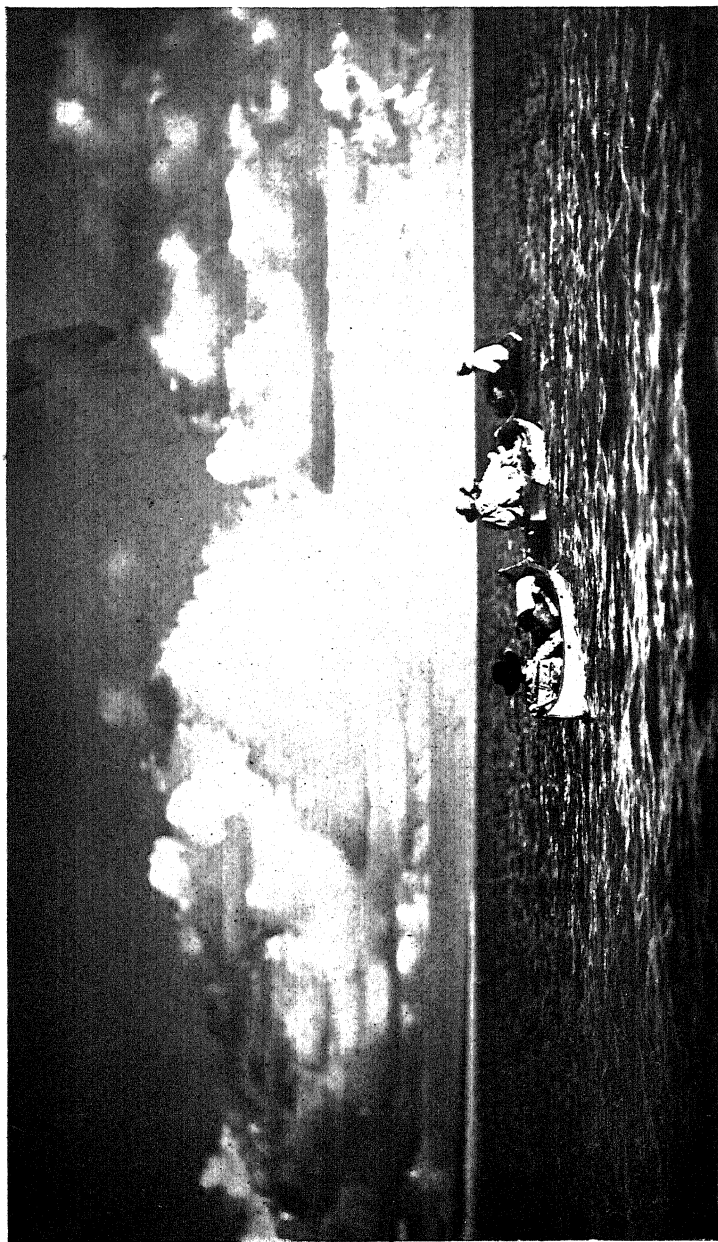
The village was attractive of its kind, consisting of three or four large buildings, neatly thatched, with large tables three feet above the ground, which served as floors. There were clocks (not running) on the walls and sewing-machines on the tables or floors, while accounts hanging on a hook showed frequent dealings with a Miami tradesman. The little colony consists of four or five families and less

than thirty members. The men wear shirtwaists and bare legs, the women beads above, skirts below, and a middle zone which seems to have been forgotten.

At night we camped near the village, and I made my bed in the lower end of an Indian canoe that was twenty-five feet long and lay upon the sloping bank of a little canal. My companion slept just above me, and must have dammed the rain, when the usual deluge came suddenly in the night, with his bar blanket and himself, for when he got up, the rush of water nearly swept me away; but I was getting used to this, and only feared that I might get dry some day and take cold from the exposure.

We cooked breakfast by the Indians' fire, and then, after a short run with the motor boat, poled leisurely for the last few miles, during which the current of the water on which we floated changed from the southwest course it had maintained since we left the west coast, to about the opposite direction. This would suggest that the maximum elevation of the southern Everglades may be measured by the fall in its course of the Miami River, and that the current stories of eighteen feet of elevation above sea level may be looked upon as fairy tales.

It was late when we found the south fork of the Miami River, and dark when we sat down to a square meal at a hotel. The return trip around Cape Sable, although under power, was more trying than the one through the Glades. Shoal water, and sticky mud that was blue and bottomless, bothered us at times,



Rounding Cape Sable on the return trip.

and the closing of a creek by the railway added many miles to our course, mosquitoes and sand-flies afflicted us, and our supply of fresh water ran out, producing in all of us, when we discovered it, a sudden and intense thirst.

Around East, Middle and Northwest Capes we encountered waves so high that their tops gently lapped over the coamings of the power boat, while we in the skiff bailed continually, and only the little canoe kept its contents dry. During an all-night run up the coast, a rain squall flooded us and stopped the motor, while the whole flotilla tossed about in the darkness and rain and drifted seaward for an anxious quarter of an hour, even the imperturbable hunter-boy remarking: "Looks like we've got to swim."

But we had crossed the Everglades in four days with no other guide than a compass, traveling seventy miles to make fifty-three, which seems to us like an air line under the circumstances.

I estimated that from Everglade to Miami across the glades we traveled one hundred and forty-six miles in six and a half days, and from Miami to Everglade around the cape, one hundred and forty-eight miles, in three days and one night.

We saw no game during the trip and the track of but one deer. Two alligators and a good many turtle appeared. Birds were scarce, but there were enough to keep one from being hungry if other food gave out. Fish abounded from coast to coast. In most of the deeper channels tarpon could be seen. Big-mouthed bass, called trout in Florida, were

plentiful, as were gar, bream, and several other varieties, and a few mullet were seen.

Our experience was that one meets delay in the Everglades, but not danger. The water is pure and sweet and food plentiful enough. Limpkins taste like young turkeys; all members of the heron family likely to be found in the Glades and most other birds are fair food. Snails, which abound, are delicacies when called periwinkles; you will pay a dollar a portion in New York for the frogs that are yours for the catching in the Glades. There are plenty of turtle, which possess all the good qualities, except cost, of the green turtle or the terrapin. A few fruits can be had for dessert—cocoa-plums, custard-apples, and pawpaws—while the leaves of the sweet bay make a fragrant beverage.

Crossing the Everglades of Florida in a boat is not an adventure, it is a picnic.

A TRIP THAT FAILED

CHAPTER XVII

A TRIP THAT FAILED

WE began the trip in canoes but ended it in an ox-cart. We paddled and wallowed through two hundred miles of flower-clad lakes, and boggy, moccasin-infested trails, zigzagging from border to border of the Florida Everglades, and were hauled for five days over pine-covered stretches of sand, across submerged prairies, and through sloughs of the Big Cypress country, but we failed to reach the big lake by twenty-five miles.

Last year we crossed the Glades, from west to east, in a power boat, over the deepest water known for a decade. This year, from Cape Sable to Lake Okeechobee, we could seldom find water enough to float a canoe.

Last year's trip was a picnic. That of this year—wasn't. But it was worth a dozen picnics and, after all, the hardest work was of our own compelling.

The explorers were the Florida man, the Camera-man, and the scribe. We wanted a guide to the Indian camps of the Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp, and an interpreter after we got there, but such of the Everglade Indians as had a smattering of English shook their heads when interviewed, and

said, "*oko suckescha*" (water all gone) so we finally engaged a Pineland Seminole—Charley Tommy—with the English vocabulary of a third-class parrot, who agreed to go with us as guide and interpreter. As an interpreter he was useful, but if he had any knowledge of the Everglades I never detected it, nor do I recall a time when he wasn't lost. But then he was "a amoosin' cuss" and really earned his pay. His promise to meet us at Everglade in two weeks had been a solemn one, ending with a dramatic, "Me no lie!" He was on hand at the appointed time, but neither drew himself up to his full height and pointed to a shadow cast by the sun, nor even recited the "Seminole's Reply." No, the descendant of Osceola was too drunk. He said to us with much reiteration:

"Lilly water in 'Glades, me think so, most dry."

Some days later we concluded that he was less drunk at that time than we had given him credit for.

The launch from the cruising boat towed our little canoe, loaded with the impedimenta of the trip, down the coast to the rendezvous at Everglade. A little below Cape Romano a high wind from the southwest built up a sea that broke over the launch and made us bail furiously to keep the motor from being drowned, while the little fifteen-foot canoe rode the waves like a duck. At Everglade we were joined by the Florida man and the Seminole, and added to our outfit a canoe of similar model, but eighteen feet long. The two were to carry us to



For five days we lived aboard this prairie schooner.

A Trip That Failed

Okeechobee. Their aggregate weight was one hundred and forty pounds, or something less than their cargo of plates and camera. Small space was taken by such non-essentials as food and clothing. We wore little of the latter and a little grub goes a long way when one is out for a bigger purpose than pandering to his stomach. A light canvas sheet sometimes served as a sail by day and occasionally kept out some of the rain at night. We used the launch to tow the canoes through the labyrinth of bays and rivers of the Ten Thousand Islands to the head of Lossmans River. Our boatman borrowed Johnny, an Everglade boy of thirteen, an alligator hunter from his cradle, to help him find his way back. When we started, Johnny took the wheel with an air of grown-up nonchalance that ended in his tumbling overboard in the first half mile.

"Want to go back and get some more clothes, Johnny?" asked the Camera-man.

"Nope, got 'em all on," replied the dripping boy.

I had resolved to make a chart of our route and for twenty miles watched the needle and covered pages of pad with estimates and courses until I had boxed the compass a dozen times. The thought of plotting out that spider's web made me tired and as I scattered my torn notes among the keys, I caught a twinkle in the eye of the Florida man as he said:

"That's right, throw 'em away, you can't learn this country that way."

"I ought to know it," I replied, "all your naviga-

tion among these islands is by rule of thumb and I believe you're lost half the time, only your superb assurance conceals the fact."

As we passed through Alligator Bay we looked sadly upon the abandoned rookery of plume birds, where the attempt of the Audubon Society and other friends of the birds to save the few remaining egrets had been thwarted by the unprecedented dryness of the season, which so narrowed down the feeding places of the birds that the Indians were able to get them all. We renewed our acquaintance of last year with the crooked creeks which led to the network of shallow lakes and bays that lay between the Everglades and the heads of Lossmans, Rodgers and Broad Rivers, cutting our way through tangles of vines and other vegetation, and were again worried by wasps above and moccasins below. At dusk we landed on Possum Key, pleasantly planted in the middle of a bay and convenient for the solitude-seeking convicts of the neighborhood. Our blankets, when laid down for the night, nearly covered the tiny island and I lay upon mine in luxurious ease while the boys began to rustle some grub. Soon I felt something running over my neck, several somethings in fact, and tried to brush them off. Then, in the language of our hunter-boy, I "sat up and squalled." An army of big black ants, each from one-half to three-fourths of an inch long, was advancing upon us, biting like bulldogs whenever they got a chance. We embarked in record time and made for Onion Key, a possible camping ground in the next bay, which was encom-

A Trip That Failed

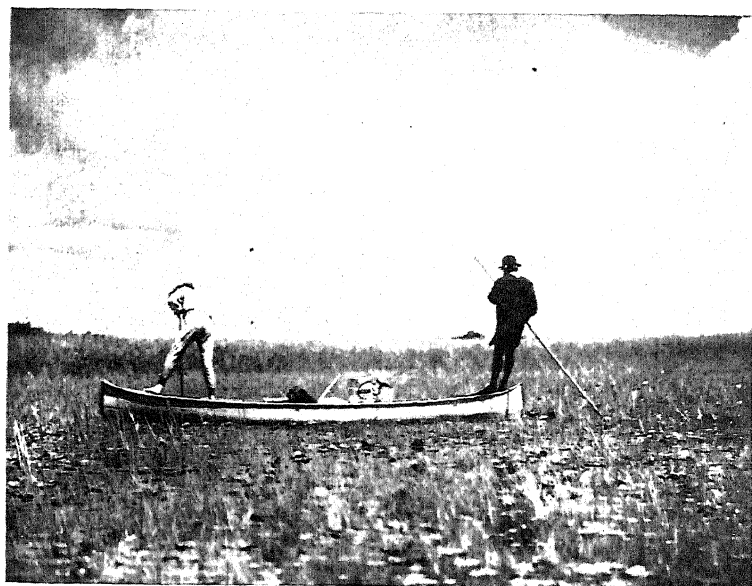
passed by heavy foliage above and dense undergrowth beneath. This, too, we found occupied by what the Florida man impertinently called "Jersey humming birds."

The boys made a fire and cooked something which no one ate but the Indian, who sat unconcernedly on a log, enveloped in a halo of mosquitoes which settled on his bare legs until he appeared to be wearing gray trousers. The rest of us had rigged up our mosquito bars and crawled under them as quickly as possible, without even the customary precaution of exploring the ground for rattlesnakes and moccasins. In the morning we broke camp and embarked with no thought of breakfast until we were out in a bay, a hundred yards from shore where, free from insects, we ate a cold, unsatisfying lunch.

The waters now were well known to us from months of manatee hunting, and the path to the 'Glades through Harney River was familiar, but the camp of Osceola, which we wished to visit, was by way of Rocky Creek. Our Pine-land Seminole was of no help in our search for the creek, which after some failures we found. It was very shallow and as the launch began to bump on the rocky bottom we got overboard and shifted cargoes, putting two days' rations and the rifle (for we carried no weapons ourselves) in the launch and bade good-bye to the boys. The Florida man and the Seminole took the larger canoe, while the Camera-man and the scribe got into the little one. Then as we dipped our paddles in the water, with the canoes pointed to the Everglades, the

boy whispered to me, "I wish I was goin' with you," and I sympathized with the child.

Neither canoe, loaded, drew over five inches, and for a time they slipped through the clear water at the rate of five or six miles an hour. Then the creek began to lose itself in the Everglades, thick grass held us back, poling took the place of paddling and when the footing was fairly firm we often chose to wade and drag the canoes. We abandoned the wandering creek for an Indian trail which led in the direction of our choice, along sloughs, through saw-grass and over marshes. Often, for one or two hundred yards, passage had been made possible by Indian-dug canals. The trail wound among little keys called heads, of bay, myrtle and cocoa-plum, and after following its turnings for three hours we arrived at Osceola's camp, only to find that it had been abandoned. A trail led northwest from the old camp and we followed it for an hour when a bit of dry ground on a little key tempted us to rest and lunch. After some coffee and canned stuff three of us reclined on the grass, but the Indian climbed a tree and lay down upon a branch. When, later, I asked him why he slept in a tree, he said: "Redbug *ojus* (plenty)," adding, "sometime me want to scratch, then me like 'em." We promptly took a kerosene bath, which became thereafter, during our stay in the Glades, our first duty in the morning and our last at night. The microscopic redbug is the dreaded wild beast of this country. Even hunters who will wade through mud ponds filled with alliga-



The water shoaled until we could hardly budge the canoe.



Then began weary days of hauling the canoes, through soft, sticky mud.

A Trip That Failed

tors, grab the unwounded reptile at the mouth of his cave, kick out of their way the moccasins in their paths and hardly turn aside for the royal rattler, will anxiously inquire before making camp:

“Any redbugs here?”

As we progressed the water deepened a few inches and we floated on a broad meadow of white pond lilies, thousands to the acre, dotted every few hundred yards with fascinating little keys topped often with picturesque palmettoes and an occasional cypress or pine. We passed masses of bulrushes, strands of flags and fields of saw-grass. Fat limpkins watched us from near-by trees, ducks flew up from every bunch of grass, and among the heron, which abounded, were a few plume birds. Sometimes we paddled up to a tiny mound, that floated in the shallow water, and admired the prettily constructed house of a die dipper, with its eggs, which we were careful not to disturb beyond clipping off such blades of grass as were in the way of the Camera-man. In some of the nests we found newly hatched birds among the eggs. Once the Indian thrust quickly with his paddle and stepping overboard took from beneath its blade a water-turkey. In the afternoon our surroundings suddenly changed from dazzling sunshine to the alternate blaze and blackness of a tropical thunderstorm. We covered up our chattels and then hurried into rubber coats, not to keep dry, for we were already wetter from work than rain could have made us, but to escape the chill of cool water, wind driven. Tommy scorned our weak devices and

smiled superior as he lay down in the warm water of the Glades till the fury of the storm had passed. Just after the sun had set we discovered Tommy Osceola's new camp, only to find that it, too, had been abandoned. Excepting for Tommy himself this desertion was temporary, as Charley Jumper and others of Osceola's band were coming back to the camp. A few days later we met Tommy in the Glades and learned that he had made new matrimonial arrangements, having dropped his old wife and married again. Tommy Osceola was an Indian of modern ideas and one of the social aristocrats of his tribe. According to Seminole usage he had to leave his old camp and live with the family of his new squaw. As she was a widow with six children and Tommy already had a few of his own, we doubted somewhat his judgment in the matter.

The camp was the conventional one of the well-to-do Seminole and contained such evidences of enlightenment as a sewing-machine, a cane mill and a device for distilling, intended, possibly, to provide pure water for the family. We kept house in Osceola's camp for a day, to give the Camera-man an inning, as he claimed that the absence of the family afforded unusual opportunities to one of his profession. We visited the fields of cane and corn that covered the patches of dry land on adjacent keys and utilized Indian implements to pulverize the latter and civilized methods to convert it into something more palatable than any Indian mess. When the hens cackled we negotiated with them for eggs

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at prices current in the settlements and put the cash therefor in their nests.

From Osceola's camp we traveled to the northeast, intending to work over to the eastern border of the Everglades. All hands toiled from daylight till dark and Tommy began to develop unrest, first asking to take the little canoe, then wanting to rest altogether, but finally suggesting that some *whyome* (whiskey) would make him strong enough to go on. By good fortune we had anticipated this emergency. The next morning the Indian treated us to his views on temperance:

"Me got no sense. Head hurts *ojus*. Think so too much *whyome* make Big Sleep come pretty quick. Lilly bit *whyome* good, me want lilly bit now."

We found less and less water and while Tommy dragged the little canoe, one of us pulled at the bow and another pushed at the stern of the big one, while the third rested. The one at the bow sometimes sank in the mud of the trail waist deep, while the toiler at the stern could save himself by grabbing the canoe, but then the pilgrim in advance could usually see the moccasins in the trail while the other could only recognize them by their squirmy feel under his feet. During a noon rest on a little key where I had just killed a coiled and threatening moccasin, which occupied most of the bit of dry land on the island, I asked the Seminole if he had ever been bitten by a moccasin.

"Um, um, six time. One time, walk in trail, push canoe, moccasin, me no see 'em, bite in leg, sick *ojus*, four week, me think so." Thereafter we worked in

pairs in dragging the canoe, walking on each side of the trail and carrying a pole between us to which the painter of the canoe was fastened. Day by day, with increasing frequency, reptiles appeared in the trail, but although my apprehensions became dulled, they were never fully quieted. The toil was incessant, the noonday sun pitiless, and the hot water scalded our feet. Then for a time the trail improved, and we met on it an old Indian in his canoe. Tommy exchanged a lot of gibberish with him of which we got the substance.

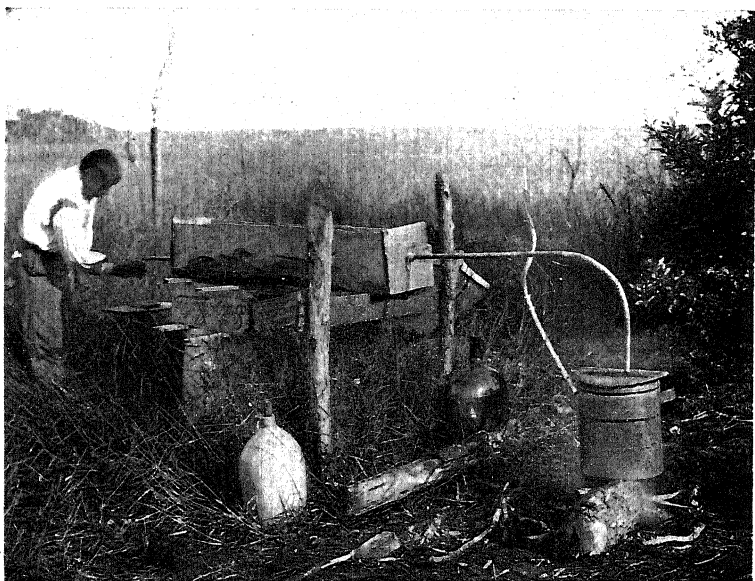
"Him Miami Jimmy, camp one mile, sick *ojus*, want lilly bit *whyome*."

We went with Jimmy to his camp of five Indians and a few squaws and pickaninnies. We were received without enthusiasm, excepting by an Indian dog with painfully sharp teeth, which rushed out and grabbed me by the leg. One of the Indians was a medicine-man and another his victim. The patient was in a bad way according to his voluble physician, who assured us that the trouble was heart disease and bad blood, that he had just bled him in thirty places, taking out two quarts of blood and would fix him in four months. The appearance of the patient indicated that he would succeed.

With sundry trinkets and gay kerchiefs the Camera-man secured the exclusive right to photograph the family, all and singular, but when the goods came to be delivered a string was found attached to them in the shape of impossible conditions of attitude, arrangements, surroundings and light, until the Camera-



We followed trails in the Glades until they dried into mud-paths.



At Osceola's camp there was a distilling device—presumably used to purify the water.

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man lost his temper, shut up his camera and used language regarding the entire Seminole tribe, which it would have been imprudent to translate. As we worked east the islands became fewer, pine, cypress and palmetto disappeared and low as was the water it yet became difficult to find ground dry enough for a camp, and sometimes one or two of us chose to sleep in a canoe. On one such night which I spent in a canoe we had three heavy rains. I rolled myself in a rubber blanket which partially protected me through the first one, but by the end of the second storm I was lying in about six inches of water and after that had to sit up to keep from drowning. When the smoke of the factories and craft of the coast became visible we changed our course to the northwest and made our way back to the borderland between the Everglades and the Big Cypress. Again the islands took on a greater variety of vegetation. Scattering cypress trees and beautiful strands of the same marked our approach to the Big Cypress Swamp. One morning we saw, about three miles to the westward, the top of a wooden building of which Tommy said:

“Me think so, Charley Tiger.”

Following the line of least resistance the three miles became fifteen and even then we hauled the canoes for half a mile over dry land through saw-grass. It was late in the afternoon when we arrived at a building of boards, across the entire front of which was a home-painted sign:

“MR. CHARLEY TIGER TAILS STORE.”

Back of the store was an orthodox Seminole camp occupied only by squaws and pickaninnies, the men being absent. We camped there two nights and the Camera-man spent one whole day in getting acquainted with some Indian girls. His efforts were unsuccessful until he assumed an Indian costume consisting of a crimson shirt. This seemed to secure the confidence of the young ladies and they apparently overlooked the fact that he continued to wear trousers. The result of his efforts belongs to the story of the Indians. After one more zigzag to near the eastern border and a return to the more picturesque western side of the Glades, we headed north for Okeechobee. One day we found water that floated our canoe and as a high wind favored, converted our bit of canvas into a sail that in a few hours put many miles behind us. Once more the water gave out and we found Indian canoes abandoned on little keys because of it. We met Indian hunters whom we knew, who had turned back from hunting because "*oko suckesche*."

Tommy suddenly remembered that his pickaninnies were hungry and he must go home. A little *whyome* would have convinced him to the contrary but that argument had been drunk up. As we struggled on, the work grew harder, keys and trees scarcer and moccasins multiplied. Camping on a little key one night, the Camera-man was struck in the face by a frog that jumped against his mosquito bar and a moment later a struggle and a squeak beside him told that a snake had secured a supper and that

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the disturber of his rest was punished. There were twenty-five miles of nearly dry land and heavy saw-grass between us and the big lake and an alligator hunter who met us as he was returning disgruntled from a hunt, dragging his canoe, summarized our prospects.

"Half a mile a day, over dry trails, through saw-grass twelve feet high, with no air and a d—d hot sun sizzling your brains."

The Florida man could spare no more time and conceding that the trip had failed, we decided to make for Boat Landing, locally known as Bill Brown's, on the western border of the Everglades. Tommy was a happy Indian when we turned back and told him that it was now "Bill Brown's or bust," and every few minutes for a whole day he could be heard repeating to himself with a laugh, "Bill Brown's or bust."

From Brown's the Florida man started on foot with Tommy, the former for a forty-five mile tramp home, over prairies and through swamps in the Big Cypress country. Brown put a couple of yoke of oxen to a cart, loaded on our canoes, and with two of his boys we started for the Caloosahatchee River to resume our interrupted itinerary. During the first hour of our journey we were struck by lightning, the team ran away, the boy who was driving was knocked down and I felt like a live wire. Our road lay in the northern end of the big Cypress Swamp and ran through groves of palmetto, around heads of ash, maple, water and live oaks, bunches of cypress

trees draped with Spanish moss and covered with orchids, meadows of wild sunflowers, six to eight feet high, hiding all of the oxen but their backs, through swamps dense with undergrowth and dark with thick growing trees, and across sloughs of clear flowing water beside which lay half-finished Indian canoes fashioned from the trunks of great cypress trees that grew on its banks. Wild turkeys were abundant and tame, deer plentiful and we flushed a number of flocks of quail. We had carried no guns in the Glades and it was weeks since we had eaten a Christian meal, and therefore it was that no scrap of the turkey gobbler that was served for our first supper was left over for breakfast. It may have been a tame turkey—I asked no questions—but that night, as I rested on a fragrant bed of penny-royal, I quieted my conscience with the reflection that *malum prohibitum* was not always *malum in se*. As the slow-moving oxen wore away the days, the landscape changed and in place of the flora of the swamp came areas of tall pines above a carpet of low-growing scrub palmetto, alternating with shallow ponds and meadows of grass from which half-wild cattle, wary as deer, gazed upon us with apprehensive eyes. One of the boys walked beside me, gathering specimens of grasses, weeds, flowers, herbs and vines, giving names and characteristics, knowledge born of a trip with a botanist. Cattle recognized his voice at the distance of a mile, half-wild razor-backs brought their families to him from half that distance and owls held conversation with him at night.



We passed cunningly constructed nests of the diedipper.



This sinuous creature fascinated us and seemed altogether worthy of his Indian name, "The King."

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When we traveled after dark the Camera-man and I rode in the cart. By day we could see the venomous snakes which filled the fields and overflowed into the road. I don't know how many we killed. Late one afternoon, while walking with the Camera-man, he snatched me aside just as the loud jarring of rattles smote my ear. Coiled beside the path was a magnificent specimen of a diamond-back rattlesnake, nearly seven feet in length, and a foot in circumference, with head and tail lifted eighteen inches above the irregular coils of the glistening body. We had slain many big, black-bodied, stubtailed cotton-mouth moccasins with no other feeling than repulsion, but this grand, sinuous, spectacular creature fascinated us and seemed altogether worthy of his Indian name, "The King." His quivering tail was a blur and from the vibrant head on the curving neck a serpent tongue darted forth and back incessantly. I stood as near his majesty as I dared and kept him at bay while the Camera-man went back to the cart for camera and plates, and a boy to help our subject to pose. It was almost hopelessly late in the day for photographic work, but it was impossible not to make the attempt. We kept the reptile angry and coiled by threatening him with sticks, while the Camera-man with face buried in the hood of his instrument, exposed plate after plate, as we worried the snake into more threatening attitudes, once asking:

"How far off is he now?"

"Eight feet."

"Watch out if he jumps."

“You bet!”

When the last plate had been exposed and while I was considering how to capture the creature with the least injury and danger to him and to us, our boy driver, who had left his team to see the fun, struck at the still furious snake with his big whip. The end of the thirteen foot lash curled past us and with the crack of a rifle sheared off the rattles of the reptile as clean as could have been done with a knife. The blow dethroned the king, crushed his splendid spirit and so intensely annoyed me that I told the boy to get a stick and kill the creature. Then I walked sadly far down the road lamenting again that the trip had failed.

That night a wandering native joined us. The after supper campfire stories were of snakes and as I wanted facts on the subjects I asked him:

“Did you ever *know* of a man dying from the bite of a rattlesnake?”

“Never knew one that didn’t excepting old Ferguson, and he’s worn a wooden leg ever since he got out of the hospital,” he answered. I asked about the story, current in the country, of a boy who did get well.

“Ugh! I know that kid. He never was bit. He got scared by a rattler, jumped into a bunch of cactus and thought that the snake had killed him.”

Later we broke camp to make a few miles in the coolness of the night and, when I asked the native if he was coming with us he shook his head saying:

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"I know this country and I wouldn't walk that next mile in the dark for your whole outfit."

When we reached the big flower garden known as the Caloosahatchee River the Camera-man and the scribe got into the larger canoe and, towing the other, paddled down the stream. Wind and tide are the landscape gardeners of this river, at one hour filling it from bank to bank with the lovely water hyacinth, at another breaking the mass up into islands and banks of flowers of many sizes and forms, arranging and rearranging them with kaleidoscopic effect and suddenness. We paddled among those gorgeous masses, drinking in their beauty of color and design, regardless of the anathemas with which boatmen of all degrees had weighted each bunch of them.

Until noon the day was dazzling, but it was the storm month and it made good by piling up masses of black clouds in the east and sending down a deluge of rain that shut from our sight the river's bank. We covered up camera and plates and prepared for a ducking, when—the storm that was within a hundred yards melted away and not a drop of water fell on us.

The tide was against us for the last ten miles of the river but a canoe oughtn't to be troubled by a tide and we made the mouth of the river that night as we had planned. We left the smaller canoe at Punta Rassa, to follow us in the mail boat, as in case of bad weather in the Gulf of Mexico even one canoe would keep us busy. We filled a fifty-pound lard can with ice obtained from a fish boat, wrapped it

in a blanket and put it in the middle of the canoe. Every half-hour of our labor we laid down our paddles long enough to dip a cup of ambrosia from the can.

At daylight, as we were starting out of the pass for our forty-mile paddle down the coast, we were passing the yacht of a retired admiral of the Japanese Navy when its owner hailed us:

"Where are you going?"

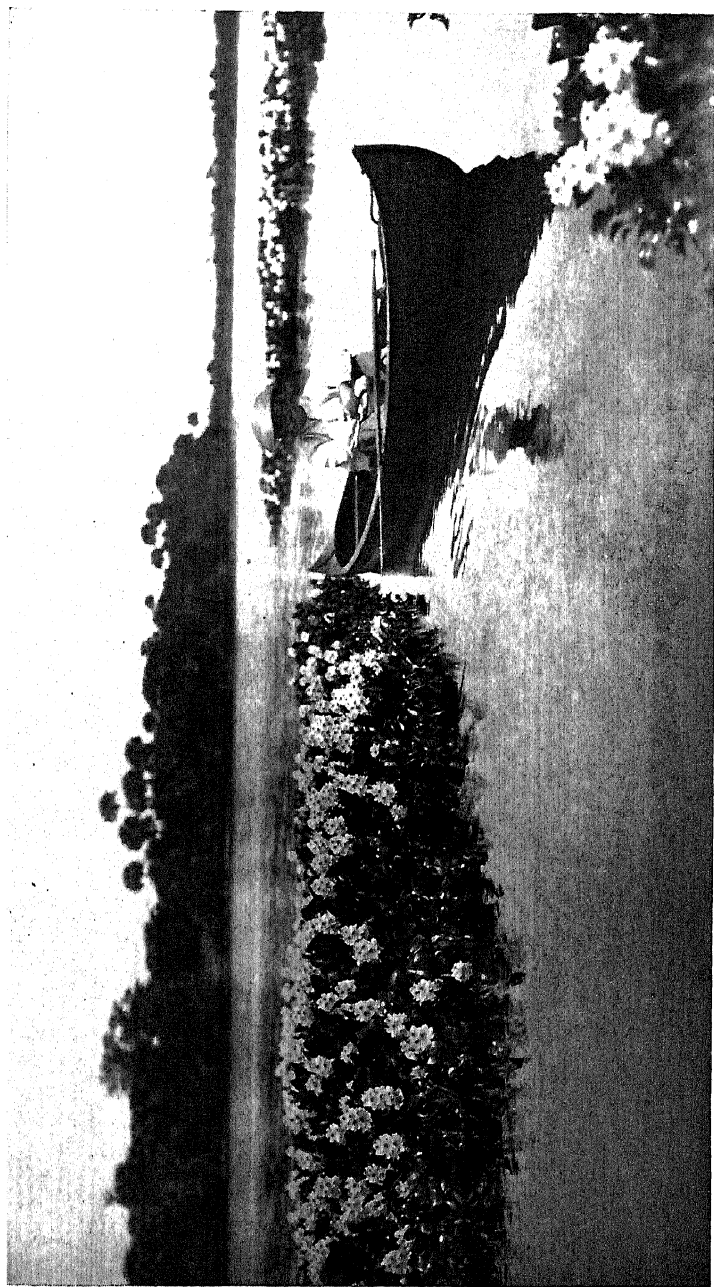
"Marco," said I.

"Not in that thing?" inquired the Admiral.

"Yep," I replied.

"You're a couple of children and I wish to Heaven I were going with you," came to us as we dipped our paddles into the water.

Every minute of the trip down the coast was a distinct pleasure. The wind was fresh and there was exhilaration in the waves, increasing to excitement as we crossed the breakers at the mouths of the many passes. About noon, when off Little Hickory Pass the Camera-man said he wished we had something more substantial for lunch than the pie and fruit a girl had put up for us. Just as he spoke a fat pompano jumped into the canoe and we promptly paddled through the surf and soon were sitting in the shade of a palmetto, eating broiled pompano and drinking iced lemonade. The wind freshened and held us back, while the waves grew bigger and darkness found us ten miles from our destination. We again ran the canoe through the surf to the shore and slept on the beach until the rising of the moon.



Down the Caloosahatchee River, through masses of water-hyacinths.

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Then, in the solemn beauty of its light which was reflected from the white crests of breaking waves and rested brightly on the beach save where it was crossed by dark shadows of tall palmettoes, we paddled silently down the coast and at midnight, passing between the palms that guard the entrance to Marco Pass, finished the trip that failed.

**TURKEY TRACKS IN THE BIG
CYPRESS**

CHAPTER XVIII

TURKEY TRACKS IN THE BIG CYPRESS

WHEN the creatures of the wild were named, the wild turkey should have been christened Wise Turkey. The big bird is by nature sociable and if, at times, he seems distrustful of human beings, it is because he is quick to recognize a hostile purpose.

The Indian hunter compared his perception with that of the wary deer, to the advantage of the bird.

“Deer look up, see Injun, say: ‘Maybe Injun, maybe stump’; turkey look up, see Injun, say: ‘Maybe Injun,’ then run away quick.”

When, in the wilderness, I fired a gun which I had loaded for turkey, every chick of the family within a mile took to the tall timber. When, in that same wilderness, three years of observation had shown them that the gun was fixed for crows, the wild turkeys paid no attention to its discharge, even when it was fired within twenty feet of a brood of them, or when a dying crow fell beside them.

In many states where these birds once flourished, they may now be classed with the dodo. The one place, within my observation, where their number has decreased but little, in the last two decades, is the country of the Big Cypress Swamp in Florida.

Here their environment protects them. In the dry season the turkeys scatter over the open prairies where they are not easily approached. When these are covered with water that rises to the hunter's knees, above fathomless mud in which he might disappear entirely, they gather in the thick woods of the hummocks.

On one of these almost unapproachable oases is a recently established grapefruit plantation. The owner of these three hundred acres has forbidden the killing of turkeys on his grounds. The Indians, who often visit his place, scrupulously respect the prohibition; white hunters don't poach on the domain, because of its inaccessibility and the certainty of detection; while the negroes, who work in that isolated field, prefer not to incur the twenty-five dollar penalty, the sure enforcement of which means involuntary servitude for an indefinite period.

The plantation is a sanctuary for negroes to whom its seclusion is advantageous while its white employees are either lonesome-proof or constitutional wanderers. One day, as I rested on a log, watching a flock of turkeys which was strolling fearlessly about a lot of laborers, the boss of the gang, a weazened old man with an unfamiliar face, sat down beside me. We talked of the plantation, its history and its prospects, its work and its workmen, and then, as a bunch of turkeys came near us I remarked: "It would be wicked to kill wild birds that are as friendly as those."

"Most as bad as shootin' turkeys from their roost at Skeleton Creek?" he asked.

I nearly fell off the log. A full generation had



It would be wicked to kill wild birds that are as friendly as these.

Turkey Tracks in the Big Cypress

passed since I had hunted and camped with this man on the Indian-infested, buffalo-covered prairies of the Indian Territory. He had reminded me of a day when I had vainly tried to stalk some wild turkeys on the prairie and of a night when he had led me under the trees where the turkeys roosted and in sheer desperation and weariness of spirit I had shot a few out of a tree that was filled with them.

On the plantation, groups of young gobblers and hen turkeys with their broods walk freely and fearlessly among the workmen and they have often come within reach of my hand as, in the shade of a water oak, I sat idly on a stump. Yet they kept wary eyes upon the suspicious character who neither slung an ax nor grubbed with a mattock, and were more distrustful of a slight motion of my hand than of a shovelful of soil thrown beside them by a laborer. They responded promptly to the call of a tree felled by the workmen, to seek the insect life to be found in its upper branches.

Though, at first, the turkeys turned inquiring eyes upon the camera when the shutter clicked, it soon ceased to interest them, but when they observed that the unobtrusive steps of the Camera-man happened always to follow their own, they became suspicious and he had to suspend his pursuit for the day. Sometimes, when the turkeys seemed especially sociable, I sought to secure their confidence by scattering handfuls of grain among them, but they feared the gift-bearing Greek, and I only succeeded in implanting distrust, by actions which their inherited experience

had taught them were of evil portent. Although the Camera-man spent much time trying to photograph turkeys on the wing, he couldn't run fast enough to make them fly. They always managed to keep ahead of him until they could plunge into the dank recesses of a cypress swamp which ended the chase.

Work on the plantation began but a few years ago and even now it is only partially cleared, yet generations of wild turkeys have known it as a sanctuary and within its boundaries exhibit changed natures. I hobnobbed one morning with a hen turkey and her brood and later saw them wander out on the prairie away from the plantation. On the following day I saw them again, several miles from their hummock homestead and was able to identify them with reasonable certainty. But their natures had reverted to type and they were typical wild turkeys, not to be approached within gunshot.

When conditions of food and dryness on the prairie invited the turkeys, they left the plantation, group by group, and brood by brood, until it was almost barren of turkey life, but the first storm that flooded the prairies drove them home again, singly and in flocks. On the prairies they were wary as the wildest of their species. In the plantation they became tame as barnyard fowl. Sometimes a hen of the hummock hatched a brood elsewhere and brought her half-grown chicks to the old home, where it took her long days to educate them out of their wildness. Occasionally strange wild turkeys followed a home-coming flock and made their first visit to the plantation when fully grown.



They responded promptly to the call of a tree felled by the workmen.

Turkey Tracks in the Big Cypress

Day by day their distrust grew less and in a few weeks the immigrants couldn't be distinguished from the well-behaved native born.

The tourist-sportsman seldom penetrates the haunts of the wild turkey in the Big Cypress country. The habitat of the birds is surrounded by moats, sentineled and guarded by fierce warders. The eye of the hunter as he walks should be keen to distinguish the ugly, coiled cottonmouth from the mud of the trail which it closely resembles. His feet must be nimble to avoid the only less dangerous little speckled-bellied moccasins that swarm in his path, and his ear quick to catch the locust-like warnings of deadly rattlesnakes that lurk in the grass. Even the few dwellers on the borders of the Big Cypress have a wholesome dread of these reptiles, which is highly protective of the game of the country.

Most of the turkeys that are killed here are shot by alligator hunters for food. The vocation of these men carries them into the very home of the reptiles and accustoms them to ignore a danger which they yet never belittle. Sometimes a hunter drags a torch of palmetto fans across the wind, through the grass of a prairie until it is swept by a wall of roaring flame, half a mile in width. Turkeys are unharmed; deer are even attracted by the ashes; but snakes perish by the thousand in the flames. A guide of my own was bitten by a rattlesnake while we were hunting for turkeys in the Big Cypress and although my companion, who was beside him, at once sucked the venom from the wound, the victim came near.

passing over the divide and it was weeks before he recovered.

The born hunter, who walks without stepping on anything, passes through thickets without touching a bush, and spots every leaf that stirs within a hundred yards, can usually pick up a turkey for supper within an hour's walk in the woods or on the prairie. It takes the sportsman longer. In former years I hunted them and have spent days vainly approaching birds that played hide and seek with me, but always kept just out of range. When I sought them by moonlight in their roosts I got them, but when I played fair they outwitted me. On the few occasions when I have successfully stalked a wild turkey there has usually been reason to suspect that the bird I bagged was not the bird I was pursuing.

One morning while in camp in the Royal Palm Hummock I heard the gobbling of a turkey which I could definitely locate in a dense thicket about three hundred yards distant. Leaving the camp, with my rifle, I told my companion that I would bring home that turkey for dinner. I then spent an hour in stealthily approaching the place from which came, every few minutes, the gobbling of the creature which I couldn't see. Before I reached the thicket the sound had ceased, but, later, was renewed from a clump of trees a quarter of a mile beyond. Again I skulked and crept until I reached the clump from which the gobbling had seemed to come, when I saw the turkey enter a mangrove swamp several hundred yards from me.



At first they turned inquiring eyes upon the camera when the shutter clicked.

Turkey Tracks in the Big Cypress

It was quite useless to go farther, but the Spirit of the Chase obsessed me and I plunged into the tangle of mangrove, from which I emerged some hours later mud-bedraggled and worn out, body and spirit. I leaned, disheartened, against a fallen tree. For half an hour I rested for the coming interminable tramp back to camp and the humiliating arrival, empty-handed, when suddenly my turkey, or another, loomed up before my eyes. He was within twenty-five yards and looked bigger than an ostrich.

I did not dare to breathe until he turned away from me and lowered his head. Then I cautiously laid my hand on the rifle beside me and slowly turning it drew a bead on the middle of the big body of the turkey. Of course at that short range I ought to have shot off his head, but I might have missed and had to carry to camp an excuse instead of a turkey, while a shot through the body could be accounted for by the substitution of rods for yards in the story at the camp-fire. Thirst and fatigue were forgotten as I picked up the big bird and prepared to return to the camp. It then occurred to me that I didn't know where the camp was. I was troubled until I thought of the royal palms beside it, which lifted their splendid heads to twice the height of the surrounding forest. The towering tops of these grand old trees were never more pleasing to me than when I caught sight of them from a tree which I then climbed.

As I neared the camp I heard signal shots from my companion, to which I replied, finding him, on my arrival, much perturbed because of my long absence,

coupled with his knowledge of how easy it was to get lost in a Florida swamp and how unpleasant after it had happened. That experience has come twice to me and in both instances I was led astray by wild turkeys. I think that if a balance could be struck it would be found that turkeys had quite as much fun with me as I have had with them. But at least they have taught me that the best way for the ordinary sportsman to get wild turkeys is to let them hunt him.

Of course the place in which he hides must be chosen with judgment. The edge of a prairie, a clump of trees, and just before sunset make a good combination. I have often had good luck while sitting quietly in a skiff as it drifted down some little stream in a turkey region. Chance counts for a lot. I once cruised with a certain well-known naturalist whose constantly recurring, unearned good luck was of sinister significance. When he went fishing, because he was too lazy to hunt deer with me, I tramped all day and got nothing while he brought back a buck which swam out to his skiff and was caught with a landing net.

On another occasion, when we were out in a swamp hunting for turkeys, he became tired and stopped to rest and write under a wide-spreading live oak for the rest of the day while I continued to hunt. When I came back with a tale of several turkeys seen, but none bagged, my friend was still writing, and a fat gobbler hung to a branch of the tree beside him. It was doubtless one of the turkeys I had frightened which lit in the tree just over my friend and waited for him



The habitat of these birds is surrounded by moats sentineled and guarded by fierce warders.

Turkey Tracks in the Big Cypress

to lay aside his work, wipe his pen, and pick up his gun. The naturalist then resumed his writing and was in his usual philosophical frame of mind, when I returned covered with mud and full of cactus thorns.

There is a serious side to this subject, quite worthy of consideration. It would be a misfortune for this grand creature, perhaps the bird most closely associated with the progress of our race on this continent, to become extinct. Yet this has already happened in most of the States of the Union. If we are to continue to treat the turkey simply as a game bird, to be protected only that it may be killed for sport, the finish of both turkey and fun is in sight.

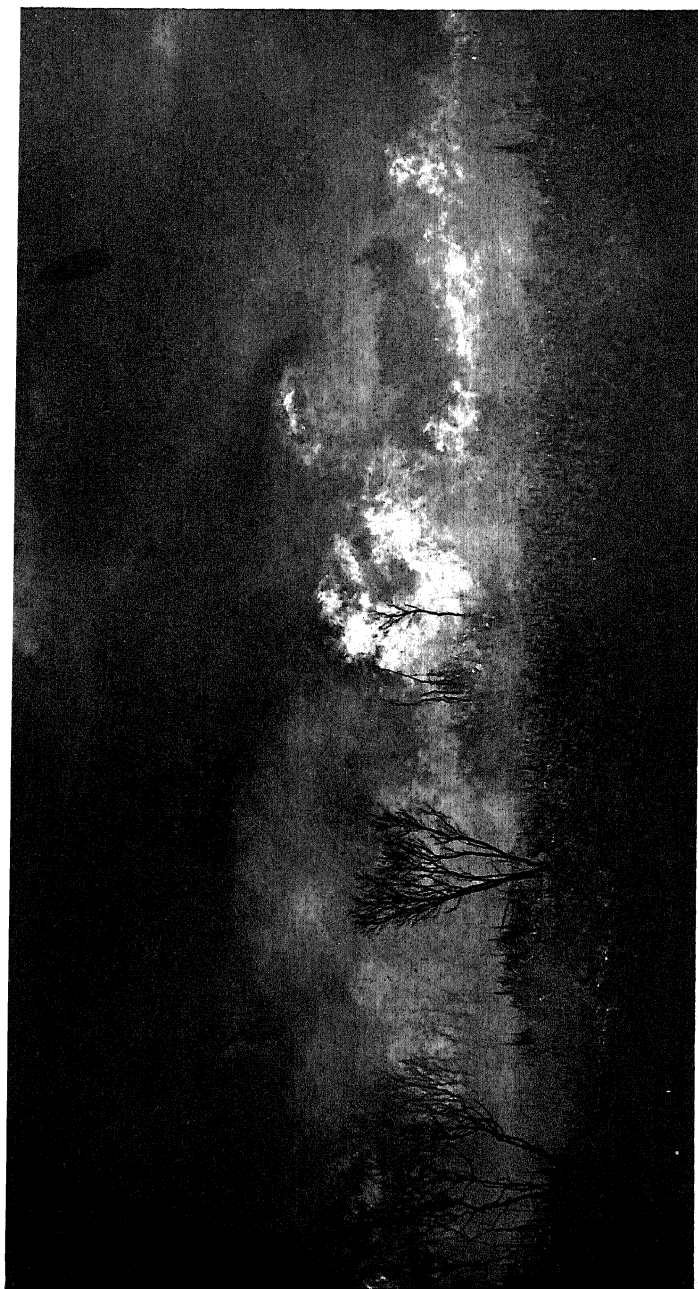
Year by year, more of our people hunt with cameras and fewer with guns. Turkeys shot with a camera remain to fill the forests with interest, enliven the landscape, and perpetuate subjects of study and enjoyment for generations to come. There is yet time to save this beautiful bird to the people of this country.

The one and only way to accomplish this is to back up wise laws by an active public sentiment. And this work should begin right in the big cities. It is the city sportsman who carries the automatic weapon and works it to the limit, often regardless of local law and local sentiment. The dweller on the border of the wilderness, while often indifferent to the letter of the statute is apt to live up to the law as his community construes it.

I once asked a Florida hunter if game laws were ever kept in the Big Cypress.

Florida Enchantments

"We boys keep 'em," he replied, "better'n the fellows we guide. I never shoot game for fun, and I don't kill ary deer or turkey when the law's on, unless I'm workin' in the woods and get hungry. If the sheriff wants to stop that he'll have to come and live with me."



A hunter drags a torch of palmetto fans until the prairie is swept
by a wall of roaring flame.

**AN ALLIGATOR HUNTER IN THE
MAKING**

CHAPTER XIX

AN ALLIGATOR HUNTER IN THE MAKING

GIMME a gun, quick, I seen a 'gator!" cried Buddy, as he tumbled down the companion-way. I nodded toward the rifle which hung over my bunk, and called out, "Magazine's full" to the boy who was leaving the cabin on the jump.

"I know it," he replied, though how he knew it I don't understand to this day.

Buddy was a little Florida cracker, twelve years old, and a great chum of mine. He was quite at home on my boat, and made me the confidant of his aspirations and ambitions. He was an alligator hunter by inheritance, and dreamed of the day when he could go out on the trail by himself. No Indian youth was ever more anxious to be reckoned a warrior than was this barefooted boy to be called a 'gator hunter.

I hurried on deck, but already Buddy was in a skiff sculling vigorously across the river. When near the opposite bank he took in his oar and sat down on the thwart with the rifle on his knees. For a quarter of an hour the skiff floated slowly toward the bay, then the boy slowly lifted the rifle to his shoulder, and after half a minute of careful aiming and waiting for the best chance, he fired. There was a cascade of water where the bullet struck after passing through the

brain of the reptile, and the upturned yellow belly of the boy's first alligator showed for a moment on the surface of the water. Buddy dragged the carcass, which was nearly twice his own weight, into the canoe, carried it ashore and skinned it with the skill of an old hunter. When, an hour later, he brought back the rifle, cleaned and oiled, he carried in his pocket three silver quarters and wore on his face a new expression of great dignity. He had killed a 'gator.

Buddy now was wild to go on a real hunt and got the promise of "Uncle Charley" to take him if his father would let him go. Uncle Charley was a hunter and a cosmopolite. I had met him guiding in the Wind River Valley, and had camped beside him on a Rocky Mountain divide more than a score of years before. Buddy coaxed me to help him, and I persuaded his father to consent to his going, by promising to go with him and look after him.

We stowed away in our 17-foot skiff such necessities as rifle, axe, bull's-eye lantern, salt, and a five gallon can of water. We added some non-essentials in the way of grub and a few, a mighty few, dishes. Our clothing consisted of shirt, shoes, trousers, hat, and belt. To these I added the luxury of two changes of underclothing and stockings, also a small roll containing tooth brush, towel, etc. Uncle Charley suggested that if I would take along a shot gun it would ease up on the grub pile.

On the first day of the trip we made twenty miles. In the afternoon an alligator slid from the bank into a creek which we were passing, and Charley suggested

An Alligator Hunter in the Making

that we camp on the first dry spot we could find and come back for the 'gator in the night.

As soon as it was dark we started out in the skiff on the fire-hunt. Buddy with a bull's-eye lantern bound to his forehead for the first time, knelt proudly in the bow with the rifle in his hands. Charley sculled, while I sat amidships hugging the smudge-pot, for the mosquitoes were fiendish. We moved slowly down the stream, while the tiny searchlight played over its surface and along its banks. Excepting a few, low-voiced suggestions which Charley made to the boy, there was no sound from the skiff. But our progress was far from silent. For the light that fascinated the alligator frightened fish and birds, and while the latter flew from the trees beside us the leaping fish sometimes struck our craft. The motion of the skiff was checked. Slowly it was turned toward the opposite bank and I noticed that the beam of light had ceased to play over the surface and was resting steadily beneath the branches of a mangrove tree that grew on the border of the river. I could see no sign of a 'gator, but Charley and the boy did, and the boat moved steadily until, when half across the stream, I caught the dull red reflections from the eyes of an alligator as he faced us, and soon the outlines of the head were clear. As the boy was raising his rifle a whispered "no" from behind me, stopped him and we continued to advance. Nearer and nearer we came to the creature and again the weapon was lifted—this time no whisper restrained the boy—and the crack of the rifle was like the roar of a cannon in my ears.

"Look out!" came sharply from Uncle Charley, as he feared the boy was about to seize the wounded reptile, which was thrashing about beside the skiff. But Buddy was a 'gator hunter a generation before he was born, and he waited coolly until the mouth of the brute was closed. Then seizing it by the nose, he dragged its head over the gunwale and held the reptile's jaws together until the hunter had severed its spine with an axe.

As I groped my way to bed that night I slumped down to my knees in a mud hole and crawled under the bar in a slimy condition that would have done credit to any reptile in the country. A lot of mosquitoes got into the net with me, the bushes under me were constructed chiefly of knots and bumps, while things crawled over me all through the miserable night. I was awakened by the smell of coffee the next morning, and greeted by Uncle Charley as I crept from under the bar with the question: "Did you sleep well?"

"Bully," I replied.

It seemed unnecessary to explain that in my vocabulary "bully" meant tough. By the time I had taken the swim my condition demanded, Buddy had skinned the alligator, salted and rolled up its hide, and breakfast was waiting.

We rowed all the forenoon, and as the water grew shoaler in the afternoon, poled and dragged the skiff until, when we tied up at night, on the border of a partly submerged meadow, all hands were ready for supper and bed. Grits and gravy began to lose their

attractiveness, and I told Charley that I'd take his rifle and shoot some ducks the next day.

I happened to be thirsty after supper, and was horrified to find the water can empty.

Charley laughed as he told me that he had saved enough in the coffee pot for breakfast, and that we would find fresh water on the prairie the next day.

I took twice my share of coffee at breakfast and put molasses instead of grease on my grits, but resolved that there would be fresh meat for supper if I had to shoot a crow to get it.

"Better fix to camp out," suggested Charley, as we were getting ready to start and I rolled up my mosquito bar, picked up the rifle, and stuffed a handful of cartridges into my pocket.

"There's going to be something doing if there's any game in this country," I observed to nobody in particular.

"I s'pose it's agin the law to shoot a buck," Charley soliloquized. I told him the story of a boy who once proposed to carry my camera to the unexplored top of Mount Eolus, in far away Colorado, on the following day.

"But to-morrow will be Sunday," I said to the boy.

"Ain't no Sunday above timber line," he replied.

Uncle Charley's comment on the story was a fervent wish, sulphurously expressed, that we were on top of Mount Eolus that blessed minute.

We tramped all the forenoon over meadows dry, ankle deep in water, or knee deep in mud, and among

little islands of trees. About noon Buddy, who was walking a few feet in advance of me, called out excitedly:

"Look! Look! See that deer."

I looked where he pointed and saw a fawn, standing among some bushes within a hundred yards of me. I watched the pretty creature until it disappeared, and then said, in reply to a reproachful look from Charley:

"I don't shoot babies. If it had happened to be a buck—" but a man is not obliged to testify against himself.

"I know all about that, but we're hungry," muttered Charley.

A few minutes later I shot a fat limpkin which looked down upon us from a tree in a little "head" of cypress, myrtle and bay. We found here a pool of drinkable water, and made our noon camp beside it after killing a pair of moccasins which had preëmpted it. We ate the "Indian hen," from its bill to its toes, and wished it had been twins.

Soon after resuming our tramp we came upon an alligator trail which Charley said was only a few hours old. It led to a shallow pond, the water of which was roiled and disturbed, telling us that the reptile had seen us. The boy took the rifle while Charley grunted in imitation of a young 'gator. Presently the eyes and nose of an alligator appeared on the surface for a few seconds, and then slowly sank from sight. Just as they disappeared, Buddy's bullet struck the water above them. The young hunter

An Alligator Hunter in the Making

was much mortified, but the older one cheered him up, saying:

"He'll come up agin. If he don't I'll wade in and fetch him." Charley continued to grunt every few minutes, and within half an hour the reptile showed up again and the bullet from the boy's rifle lifted off the top of its skull. Buddy waded into the pool waist deep for his victim, and in thirty minutes we resumed our march with a freshly salted, tightly rolled alligator hide added to the hunters' burden.

In the afternoon Buddy found a little five foot 'gator on the prairie in water that was so shallow that he could not hide and his skin was soon on the back of the boy. From the tail of the creature I cut a steak of white flesh, delicate as the breast of a chicken, which was kept in salted water over night and broiled for our breakfast. The boy and I feasted upon it, but Charley said:

"I pass; I've killed too many of the things, and don't eat 'em less'n I hafter."

I slept soundly on the grass under my mosquito bar, which I hardly needed, so scarce were the insects; but I awoke to the knowledge of a far greater plague—the microscopic redbug, which even the Indians dread. There were a dozen little inflamed areas on my flesh that itched intolerably. The poisonous mites had to be smothered, and I took a bit of bacon and thereafter smeared myself morning and evening with its grease. Three days later we reached our skiff, Charley and the boy laden with the hides of seven alli-

gators, for true to my declarations I had refused to abet the traffic.

Before starting out again in the skiff, Charley filled our can with muddy water from a swamp hole out in the prairie, and I shot another limpkin and three coots for the larder. For two days we poled the skiff over submerged meadows, dragged it through thick grass, slept one night on a dry bit of prairie, and on the second day camped on the border of the Big Cypress.

We found here an Indian canoe which Charley recognized as belonging to two hunters from near Boat Landing. While at supper we were joined by these hunters who brought back a load of alligator hides and half a deer. They turned over a quarter of venison to us, quite as a matter of course, and I was too hungry for it to indulge in any moral scruples, and quite ignored Charley's innocent query as he broiled a slice of it:

"Any objections to eatin' a piece, seein' somebody else killed it?"

The chance of getting into the real thing in alligator hunting was too good to be lost and before we slept it had been arranged that we join forces. Business began the next morning. Breakfast was at break of day, and before the sun was up we were plunging through the dank, gloomy recesses of a dismal swamp, wading in water, wallowing in mud, walking slippery logs, and climbing over slimy stumps.

The three hunters carried cooking utensils, grub, salt, rifle, axe, iron rod, and hook. Buddy toted a rifle, while my load consisted of a mosquito bar tucked



One hunter thrust a thin iron rod through the soil until
it struck the 'gator.

An Alligator Hunter in the Making

in my belt, and a compass fastened to it. The hunters' burdens were greater, but their route was shorter than mine, for they travelled straight ahead, while I tried to walk around the moccasins in the trail. Before the end of the tramp I was walking straight, so tired that I wouldn't have turned aside for a python.

The element of sport influenced our hunters for hides about as much as it affects workmen in an abattoir. There was no excitement when we struck the fresh trail of an alligator. It was followed a few hundred yards to where the reptile had taken refuge in a cave. One of the hunters thrust a thin iron rod through the soil until it struck the 'gator, which soon poked its head out of the cave, another caught his hook in the jaw of the reptile, while the third hunter smashed its skull with an axe. In a few minutes the hide had been stripped off, salted and added to the hunter's pack. As we resumed our march the first of a family of buzzards settled in a tree over the carcass.

When we camped for the night eight hides had been added to the packs carried by the hunters, and I wished the number had been eighteen, as I needed the handicap. The boys were considerate, and often asked if they were going too fast for me, to which I usually replied by offering to carry their packs, though I couldn't have kept up the bluff half a day without the rest that came to me from the time taken to skin the reptiles. The hunters stood back, from time to time, to give Buddy a chance at every part of the business, and made formal demands upon him to

keep the camp commissary supplied. I rejoiced at the spirit shown by one of them who rebuked the boy sharply for proposing to kill another deer while yet we had half of one on hand.

It was just one week from the day we left the canoe, when the hunters laid down beside it their burden of hides. One of these hides had been carried by the boy, who, unassisted, with rod, hook, axe, and knife, had captured, killed and skinned the reptile who grew it.

As we parted with our recent partners the elder one tapped with his hunting knife the shoulder of the boy, and said to him:

"Good-bye, Kid, you can tell your folks you're a 'gator hunter."

It was the voice of authority. Buddy had received his accolade,



Another caught his hook in the jaw of the reptile.

YACHTING IN A CANOE

CHAPTER XX

YACHTING IN A CANOE

THE hurricane month had come. We had laid up our cruising boat and were foot-loose—with four weeks to spare.

"Why not go down the coast in the canoe?" suggested the Camera-man.

"Without a guide?" I asked.

"Sure!" he replied. "What do we want of a trained nurse?"

"Supplies?" I inquired.

"Ellis's equipment—'matches, gun, and a handful of salt,'" said he.

Three hours later we were paddling down the Peace River, with Punta Gorda low on the horizon behind us. We had outfitted with the aid of a stereotyped schedule of a hundred cruising essentials, using it as a list of the things which we didn't require. A blanket, mosquito bar, and the usual toilet things for each of us were rolled in a piece of waterproofed canvas on which we knelt or sat as we paddled the canoe. The one essential of every cruise was met by a fifty-pound lard can filled with water; the needs of the commissary were assured by a cheap shotgun, fly rod, hooks and trolling lines; a tin plate, cup, fork and spoon for each of us with a saucepan, corn meal and coffee made for comfort; while a lunch basket of

bread, cheese and fruit added luxury to our send-off. Our provisions would have been accounted inadequate for an afternoon picnic, but it served us for a month of camp and canoe in the wilderness of South Florida. The money cost of the entire outfit within the canoe, excepting camera fixings but including the clothing we wore, was well within twenty-five dollars, and the expenses of the month that followed added barely twenty per cent. to this sum.

Two hours of paddling had carried us well within the mouth of the Miakka River, when black clouds, rising from nowhere in particular, sent down upon us a squall of wind and rain. We kept under the lee of the river bank, but quite ignored the pluvial portion of the performance. Darkness overtook us where the meadows meet the pine woods, and we slept the sleep of the just on a grassy bed beneath the stars. Our supper was hurried and cold, of bread and cheese, but the coffee of breakfast, although made in a saucepan, was delicious to us as the finished product of the civilized chef to the epicure of the yacht.

For nine hours we paddled easily against the current of the river, resting five minutes during each half-hour. In avoiding the swift, midstream current we paddled among rushes and tall ferns; past broad meadows; around the borders of palmetto-dotted islands; beside banks of myrtle and scrub palmetto; and beneath the shade of great live oaks covered with orchids and streaming with Spanish moss. From every bend in the river birds flew up, and I secured four ducks at a cost of half a dozen cartridges.

Yachting in a Canoe

In the middle of the afternoon we camped on a high bank of sand where our dinner, consisting of a brace of ducks broiled on a bed of coals and an ash cake baked in a jacket of leaves, would have seduced an anchorite. It was the fear of mosquitoes and not their presence that persuaded us to stretch our bars for the night, but I was glad of it later, when in the darkness I heard the soft step of a panther not far from my cheese-cloth barricade. These creatures, which are plentiful in South Florida, are as cowardly as they are powerful, and I have often known them to prowl around a camp at night, but never heard of one attacking a camper. I was awakened in the morning by a redbird's reveille, sounded joyously from the top of a near-by tree, and putting aside my bar watched the birth of a new day, until the tops of the palmettoes were blazing in the light of the rising sun. For an hour the Camera-man and I reveled in a sense of freedom never before realized during the cruise of a year. Always had been the inharmonious presence of an alien spirit. The irritating conventions of civilized life have their analogues in the wilderness and the ideas of guides, boatmen and cooks are bounded by phantom walls of precedent. The creatures of the wild were all about us and unafraid. A little brown rabbit nibbled at a husk of pineapple that I had thrown aside; a tree rat showed himself among the leaves of the branches above us; while a grave old 'gator floated on the stream that flowed past. Fat grasshoppers, four inches long, garbed in garments of many colors, climbed stalks of wild cane;

birds, singly and in flocks, flew over and around us; from every side glad cries of creatures of forest and field came to our ears. We dawdled for another hour, ate the cheese that was left and some wild grapes that we gathered; and lastly, built a fire and made coffee, finishing our breakfast later with a duck that we broiled over the fire.

It was about the middle of the forenoon—we carried no watches—when the spirit moved us to embark and we began an exploration of the upper Miakka which made strenuous the working hours of the rest of the day. Sometimes our course lay between banks ten feet high, canopied by branches of great trees tangled with ropes of vine and long festoons of gray moss, where the current was so swift that to make a mile an hour demanded desperate paddling. Birds were plentiful and alligators abounded. Soon after starting I shot the four birds that our commissary called for, and when later a wild turkey flew across the stream a hundred feet ahead of the canoe, I remembered that the game laws protected him and also that my gun was empty.

The spirit of exploration continued in possession of us and we devoted another day of much toil to getting nearer the source of the stream. After a night of oblivion, on a bed of Spanish moss, we paddled, rested and floated with the current to the mouth of the Miakka in a single day.

The next morning the tide helped and a wind from the east sped us on, so that we reached Charlotte Harbor early in the day. As we were passing a supply

boat that lay beside a fish ranch near Mondongo Key, I was hailed by name and recognized an old acquaintance in the captain of the craft. When I asked for a cool drink he filled our water can with fifty pounds of ice. We tied a thick layer of moss around the can and for three days we reveled in a luxury quite unknown to dwellers within the pale of civilization. As we took up our paddles the captain tossed four fat pompano into the canoe, and when I asked if I could pay him, replied:

"If you're lookin' for trouble, you can." I seldom passed Mondongo without stopping, and on this occasion we bought of its occupant a peck of sweet potatoes, a small bunch of bananas and received the customary invitation to help ourselves to all the limes we could carry. There was a lack of legitimate pockets in the few clothes I had on. But I recalled the example of a Florida girl of my acquaintance, and when I embarked in the canoe a bushel of limes went with me and the bulge in my shirt-waist was aldermanic. An hour's sharp paddling brought us to Boca Grande, the Big Pass, and we camped on the beach outside; ate broiled pompano, roasted potatoes, baked bananas and drank iced limeade—without sugar. No mosquito bars were required that night and we lay on the beach just beyond the sweep of the surf and were soothed to sleep by the rhythmic crash of the breaking waves. The wind increased in the night to a fully fledged nor'wester. We pulled our canvases over us to keep off the rain of spray, and we pitied the folks in yachts and battleships. The crescendo roar of each incom-

ing wave uplifted my spirits and the visions of a far-away boyhood came back to me, freed from the later disenchantments of a too material civilization. The never-ending procession of white-topped billows, the rushing wind, the salt spray beating on my face and the stars shining between the tops of towering palm trees beside me, were merely the materialized dreams of childhood. The postman, the messenger boy with the yellow envelope, and the bell of the telephone seemed less real to me than the lamp of Aladdin, and the automobile more of a myth than the enchanted horse. I was awakened at dawn by the voice of the Camera-man quoting: "Alone, alone, all, all alone," and as I realized our freedom from care with no one near to criticise our conduct, I wondered if ever again I could bear to commune with Nature with a hired guide beside me.

We had planned to paddle up the coast to Gasparilla Pass in the morning, but the waves were big and were breaking in white windrows that extended far toward the horizon. If need had been, we could have weathered them, but they were a bit too big to be tackled for fun, and the danger to camera and plates would have been considerable. The canoe was of little weight and we carried it across the point of beach at Boca Grande to the harbor inside and paddled along the lee of Gasparilla Island to Big Gasparilla Pass. For half a mile a manatee swam near us and we dipped our paddles with exceeding care, lest we alarm him, until rising beside the canoe with a friendly sniff, he nearly swamped us with a parting wave of his

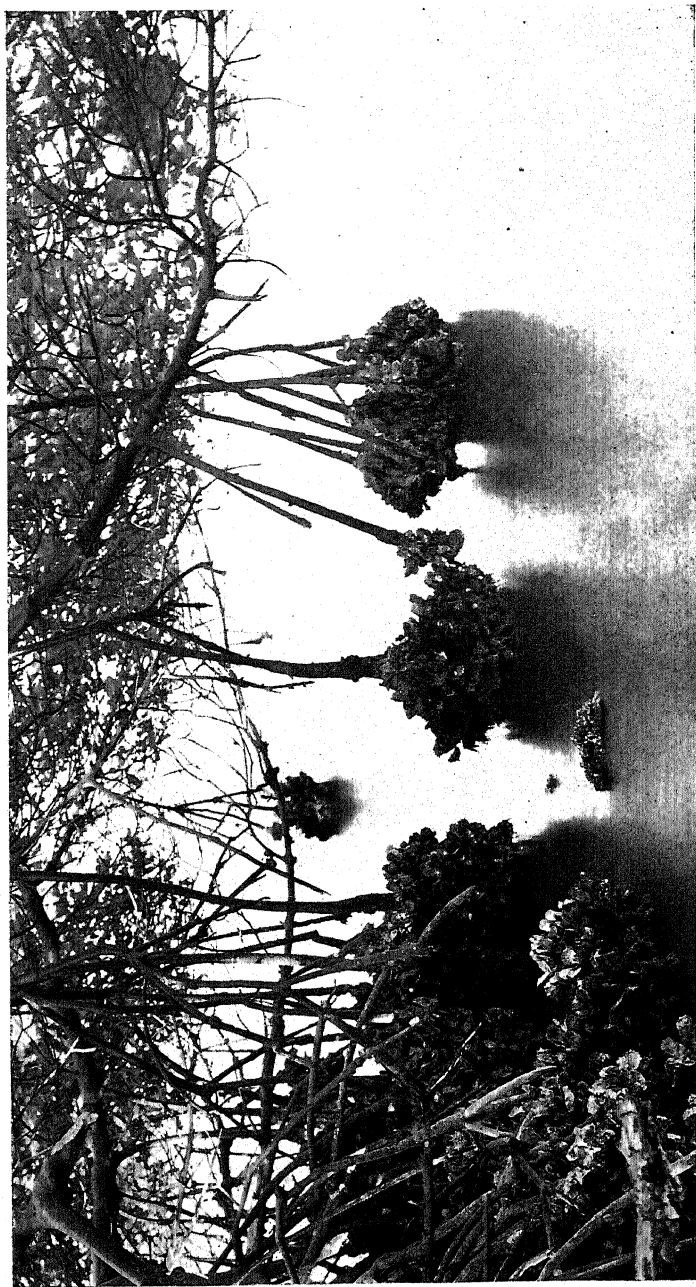
broad tail. At night the wind died out, but in the morning the sea was heavy and we made the day one of rest, visiting in the forenoon a fish camp that had been established between Big and Little Gasparilla Passes. More pompano were given us, but when we offered to pay the answer was: "We catch mullet to sell and pompano to eat."

We played on the beach all the afternoon, sometimes casting a fly in the quiet water inside the pass at a hurrying Spanish mackerel, cavally, ladyfish or sea trout that was coming in with the tide in search of its supper; sitting and musing on a worm-eaten, barnacle-covered, copper-bolted piece of timber that might have been washed up from the wreck of some old galleon; watching the crabs, which, scurrying along close to the beach, were often driven ashore by their active enemies in the water; then wandering slowly at the edge of the surf on the beach outside, we gathered multicolored shells of pompano with their living tiny tenants; traced home the trails of pretty panamas; chased to their holes the shadowy, almost transparent sand crabs that skittered along the beach; and lying prone on the sand in the shadow of a palm, dreamed dreams that pulsed with the roar of the surf in our ears.

At daylight the next morning we paddled out of the pass and down the coast past Boca Grande where an east wind, meeting heavy rollers and a strong tide, gave us for a mile more excitement than we really cared for. Big loggerheads rose beside the canoe, dolphins played around us and once we turned out of

our road that we might not disturb a great devilfish, which, lying on the surface where the waves were biggest, was being "rocked in the cradle of the deep."

At Captiva Pass we were tempted by a bunch of cavally, which were tossing the water into spray as they devoured a school of minnows. A big cavally would have kept my light fly rod busy for the rest of the day, so I tied a hunk of twine to the hook on a trolling line and the Camera-man paddled us into the mêlée. In an instant the lure was seized by a cavally so large that when, half an hour later, I landed him on the beach my hands were cut and burned and I was quite as exhausted as my captive. The jackfish is not a conventional food fish but a big one has a thick layer of red flesh which looks and tastes much like very tender beef. Tarpon were plentiful in the pass, but I only cared to catch them for the Camera-man who was too busy with his paddle and keeping the canoe trimmed, to think of using the tools of his trade in the cranky craft and the rough water. We were scheduled to reach Punta Rassa that night, but dawdled over dinner too long. When I suggested getting under way the Camera-man demurred, said he didn't want to move and added that the big jackfish steak he had eaten made him feel as if he was lined with satin and he wanted to prolong the enjoyment of it. The lack of sweetness in our iced limeade reminded me of a bee man who lived a few miles north of Captiva Pass, and after camping on the beach for the night we paddled to his ranch. The bee man was



We roasted a few bunches of oysters which we gathered
from mangrove trees.

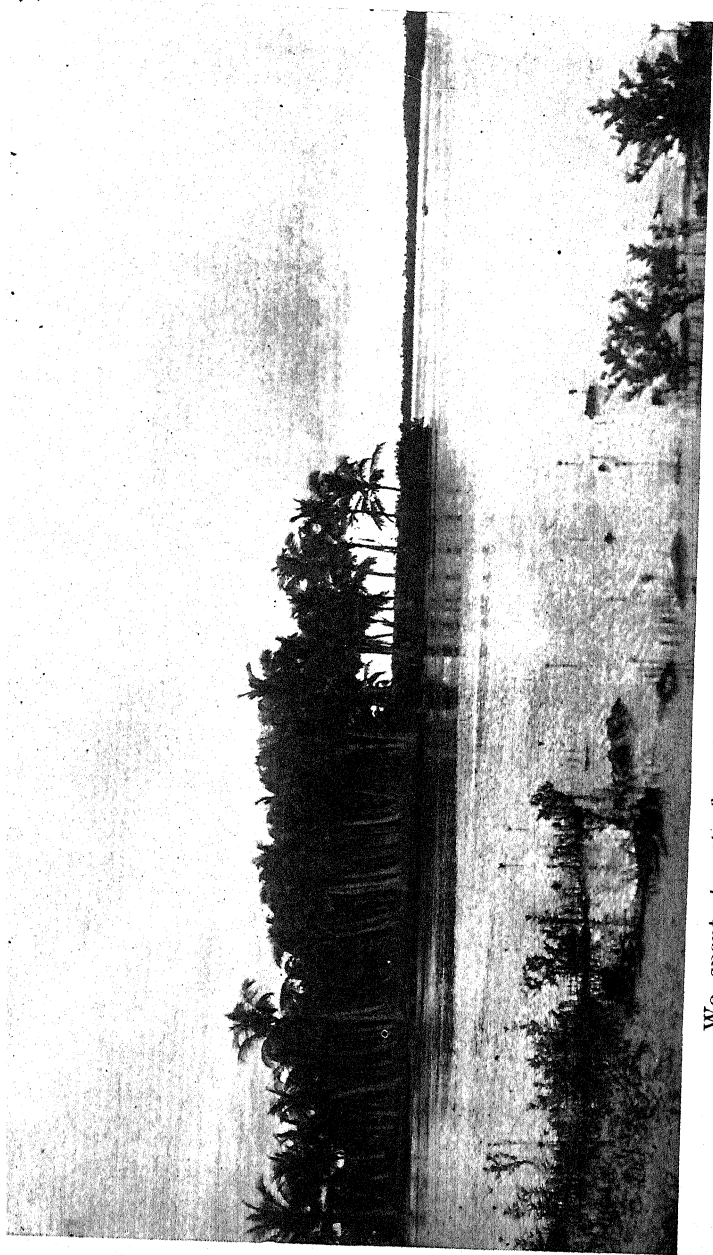
walking barefoot among his fifty hives when we found him and was pawing over bunches of bees as fearlessly as a Bostonian would have handled beans. His enthusiasm overcame our shyness as we walked with him among the hives, yet he watched us closely, warned us a little and advised us more; and we heeded his warnings and attended strictly to his advice. Then we sat in his shack, talked bees and drank metheglyn, a beverage which I had trailed vainly in spirit from Shakespeare's time but had never before encountered in the flesh. When we left we carried with us a bottle of honey and a box of comb and envied the gods neither their ambrosia nor their nectar.

Three hours' paddling brought us to Sanibel Island within six miles of Punta Rassa at a point once known as Oyster Creek. The name had disappeared, but the oysters remained and we roasted enough for our supper. The water was full of sea trout and I took in a score with the fly rod in the early morning. We breakfasted on their sounds, which were large, gelatinous and made a more delicious dish than the cod's tongues and sounds by which the old New Englander swears. A heavy rain squall, about noon, drove us ashore near Sanibel Light and we camped on the outside beach where we waded out in the warm surf to escape the chill of rain, wind-driven through garments of gauze. In the afternoon we wandered up the beach and made collections of shells that we hadn't room to carry.

On the following day we atoned for past laziness by

paddling twenty-five miles and camping in the great hyacinth garden of the Caloosahatchie River, some miles above Fort Myers. Myers was avoided as being too conventional and calling for more clothes than we were wearing. It suggested newspapers and soft drinks, tempted us with candy and cakes and invited us to invest in tinned and bottled luxuries that were subversive of the spirit of our excursion. Our camp that night was in a little cove on the north bank of the river that was free from flowers, but a change of wind before morning hemmed us in with a hundred acres of the tentacled bulbs of the water hyacinth. Forcing our way through the mass was difficult work, for it was imponderable as a bubble to pressure or thrust of paddle, but clung to the canoe like the shirt of Nessus to the son of Jupiter. We ascended the Orange River a few miles, through hyacinths that often extended from bank to bank and found the residents waging a war of extermination against the plague, by forming a cordon of boats across the stream, hoping to drive and drag the whole tangled, floating mass down to its mouth.

Our canoe rested low in the water, as we descended the Caloosahatchie River, because of the grape fruit and oranges that had been contributed to our commissary. It was afternoon when we arrived at Punta Rassa, but as the breeze favored we started down the coast, arriving at dusk at Carlos Pass, the entrance to Estere Bay. The olden-time charm of the bay had departed for us and we preferred camping on the beach to entering it. It had become the home of the



We spent twenty-four hours in Marco—our only concession to convention during the cruise.

Yachting in a Canoe

Koreshan Unity, a band of fanatics and imbeciles, under the hypnotic control of an apostle of undiluted bosh.

Our itinerary was interfered with on the following day by a couple of heavy squalls, the fear of which drove us on the beach, although only one of them reached us. While ashore we roasted a few bunches of oysters which we gathered from mangrove trees and broiled some mangrove snappers which I took with the fly rod.

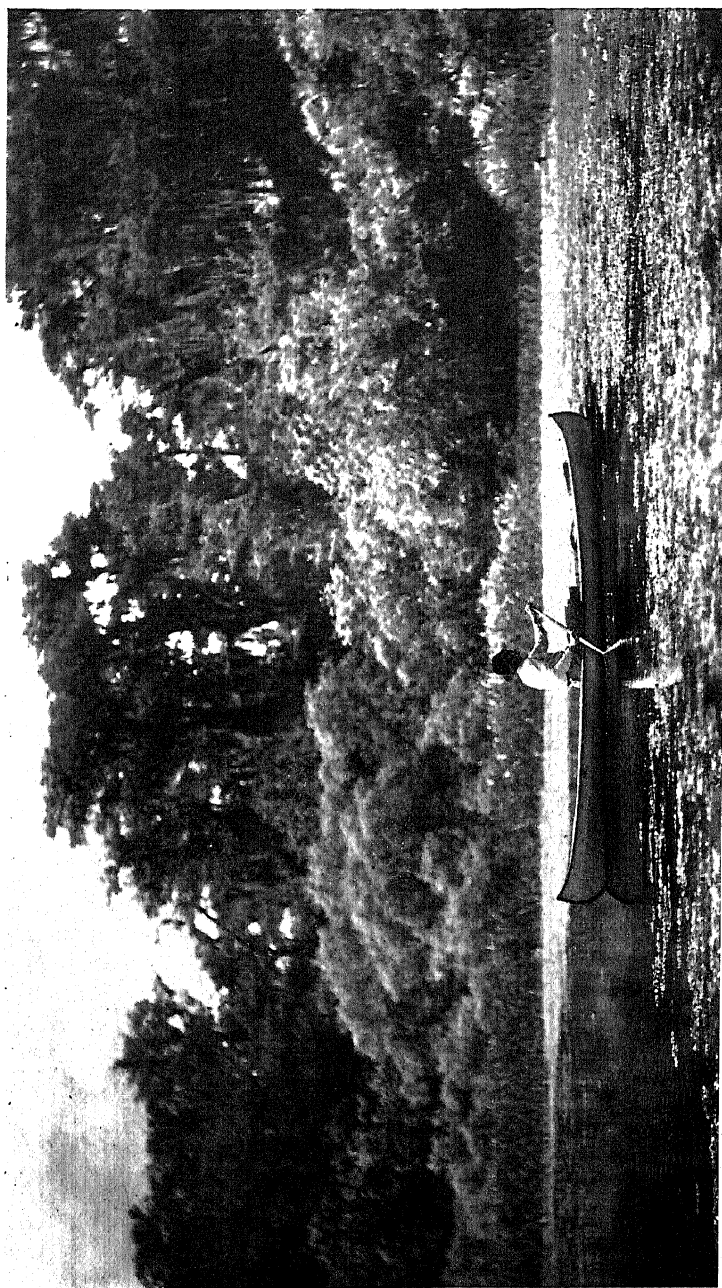
Marco had been our home for many months at a time, and we spent twenty-four hours there, for *auld lang syne*, helping ourselves to sugar apples, sapa-dilloes, alligator pears and cocoanuts, until our canoe looked like a fruit freighter. When the usual afternoon storm came on we watched the gathering clouds from the protection of the piazza, our only concession to convention during the cruise.

From Marco to Coon Key the usual route is inside, among the keys, but we chose to follow the beach and our next stop was at Caxambas where one and a half million pineapples were growing on a single plantation—when we arrived. These figures had been reduced when we left. The weather got troublesome and from Caxambas to Coon Key we spent half our time getting on the beach and behind trees and began to wonder what would be the effect on our health if our clothes happened to get dry. The tide was beginning to pour out of West Pass when we reached it at noon, so we camped on the pretty beach at its mouth, and roasted clams which we took from a

near-by clam bar. Fortunately we unloaded the canoe before going for the clams, since we capsized the craft while getting aboard. The Camera-man utilized the afternoon by photographing some pelicans and an osprey's nest.

We went up the Pass with a rush in the morning and paddled among the pretty keys of Chokoloskee Bay to Everglade, which we had often made our cruising headquarters. One can here get ripe guavas from the trees 366 days of the year, if it happens to be leap year. A small boy resident, who knew of my weakness for guavas and sugar cane, nearly swamped the canoe with baskets full of the fruit and stalks of cane twelve feet long.

From Everglade our course lay among the Ten Thousand Islands with no convenient beaches at hand, but with the prospect good of having to hunt camping ground and evict moccasins after dark; wherefore I added a lantern and a bottle of kerosene to our equipment. For four days we paddled amid a wilderness of keys without knowing, or seeking to know, where we were. At times we were in rivers, deep and swift, where fish abounded and dolphins played about the canoe. At other times broad shallow bays spread out, from which grass-choked, currentless waterways led us, by routes that were crooked and long, back to the starting point. Yet in no hour was there lack of life and interest. At every turn in our course herons flew up from the water, while snake birds dropped from the trees above; turtles, alligators and fish of many varieties disturbed the water; moccasins made lively



At times we were in rivers, deep and swift.

the bits of soil that rose above the surface, while night herons croaked about our camps and owls hooted at us by night. It was hard to find ground solid enough for camp or campfire and the wood of the red mangrove was nearly as combustible as asbestos, but we managed to broil a brace of ducks each day and bake an occasional hoe cake. For the rest, the half of a rich, creamy avocado pear as a salad and a couple of pineapples for dessert sufficed to keep us going.

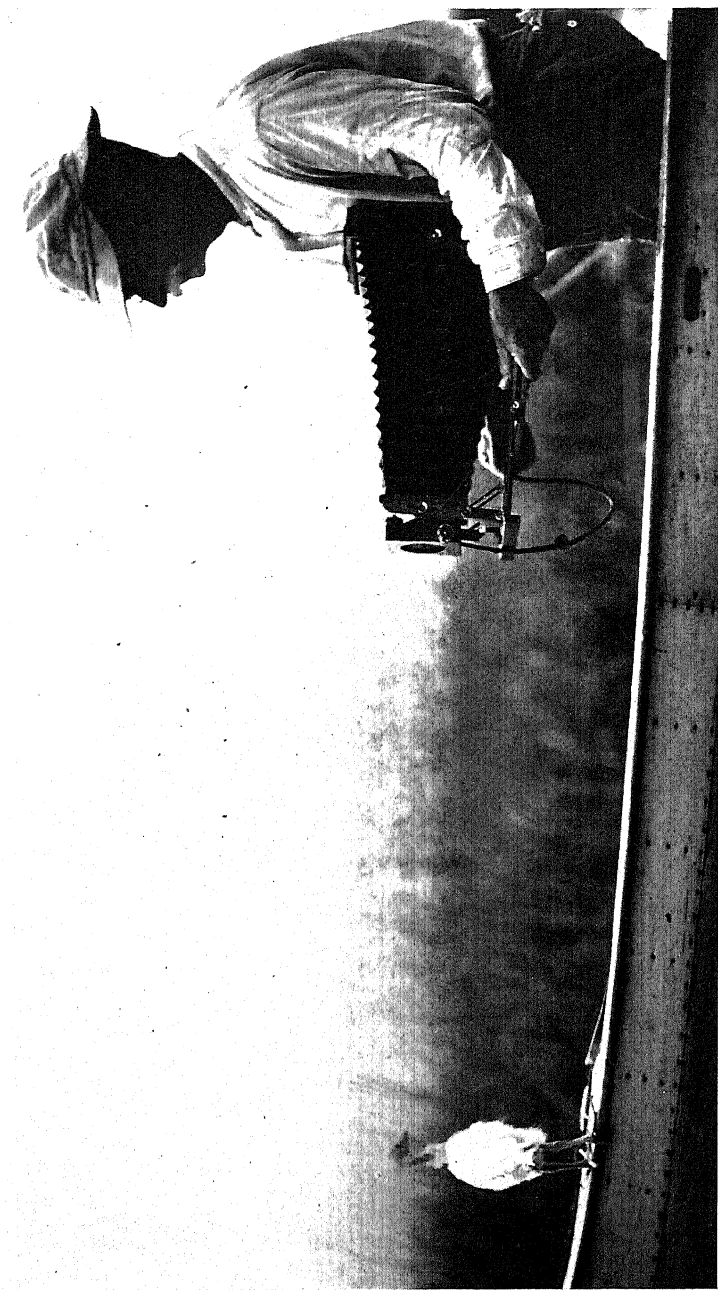
One afternoon we failed to find a place to camp, although we prolonged the search by lantern light well into the night, and were finally compelled to pile enough branches in a shallow place to keep us from drowning while we tried to sleep. I slept on, or in, my canvas which proved its waterproof quality by holding the barrel of water that poured over it soon after I laid down for the night. In the morning the Camera-man rolled out of his bed into the water—to dry himself, he said—and we rustled enough fire to broil a bird which we ate while we sat on a branch in the water. We gathered cocoa plums and wild grapes; watched the ways of birds, reptiles and fish; and laughed at the deluge of the daily rain squall until the morning of our fifth day in the unknown wilderness when the Camera-man gave me a shock by producing an empty water can and quoting in tones worthy of the Ancient Mariner:

“Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.”

The one danger of the country in which we were picnicking had befallen us, and it was time to hustle.

There was fresh water to the east of us—an ocean of it, the Everglades—but no road to it that we knew. West of us lay the Gulf of Mexico, which we could probably find in a day, after which a few hours would give us the water we wanted. We couldn't wait so long. We were thirsty already. Somewhere south of us were big rivers which ran from the Glades to the Gulf and south we headed our canoe. Always our road twisted, often it turned us back and we had to stop frequently to fight the tendency, born of imagined thirst, to paddle with a fierceness that would have run into a panic or ended in exhaustion. After some twenty miles of paddling, which scarcely advanced us half that distance, we found a stream with land on its borders and the wooded banks of a river. Its current flowed to the west, but we strove against it, keeping to the eddies and the banks until the river broke up into creeks and the water came fresh and sweet from the Everglades. We drank and we drank, we filled ourselves and our can with the beautiful water; and we camped joyfully upon a high bank which overlooked the lovely river and stretched bars that we didn't need between a palmetto and a fig tree, under a canopy of wide-spreading, fruit-laden wild grape vine.

The head of the river was unfamiliar to us and as we explored, the creeks subdivided and one after another ended in tangles which shut out the canoe and another day had departed when we entered the open water of the Everglades. For two days we zig-zagged among the little sloughs of clear water that



We watched the ways of birds.

spider-web the southern Everglades, working always to the south. We dodged strands of heavy saw-grass, paddled over submerged meadows covered with white water lilies and followed the faint trail of Indian canoes until we struck the head waters of Harney River and slept, once more, on our camping ground among the lime trees. While the Camera-man and I were enjoying the peace of the wilderness after supper, eating limes and chewing sugar cane, it occurred to us to figure up how much of our month had gone. It ended our dream of peace. Two days only of our month were left, for on the morning of the third day we must take the mail boat up the coast to connect with the train which we were to take for the North.

Half an hour after daylight in the morning we were paddling swiftly down the grass-choked river; past the almost deserted rookery, the otter slides, and the pools where the tarpon play; through the swift, crooked creek and the larger stream it leads to; across Tussock Bay, with its picturesque keys and Indian camping ground; and by way of lower Harney River to the Gulf of Mexico. Near Seminole Point, we made our final camp in a cruise of a month, without a guide, without a compass, and without a suggestion of actual peril from the beginning to the end.

A FIGHT WITH A DEVILFISH

CHAPTER XXI

A FIGHT WITH A DEVILFISH

FISHERMEN are truthful, not because they are better than other folks, but because they lack imagination. The truth as they know it is so much stranger than any fiction that even Munchausen himself in the face of such experiences would have shaken his head and sadly exclaimed,

“What’s the use!”

I am thinking as I write of the fish on the west coast of Florida a generation ago. When big nets were put out near the passes the haul of fish was counted by the hundred barrels. Mullet was the food fish of the country and a throw, almost at random, of our boatman’s cast net was good for a score or two of these fish. On their broad, shallow feeding grounds so many could be seen leaping three feet in the air that their number almost defied reasonable estimation. In my own attempt I figured on five jumps a second in range of my own sight within a horizontal limit of ten degrees. Counting the horizon around this works out ten thousand leaps a minute which is some fish. In these waters the sudden exposure of a light at night in a skiff was likely to be followed by a bombardment of frightened fish and a skiff drawn across the narrow channel of a creek has been filled to the gunwale by the mullet that fell in it from an escaping school.

There were square acres of birds on the waters while at dusk the air was filled with flocks that changed dark mangrove islands to snowdrifts as they settled upon them for the night.

Alligators were so numerous in the rivers of the west coast that mine host of Homosassa took little time to make good his promise to kill one hundred of the reptiles because one of them had killed his dog. It was accounted meritorious to kill the creatures because they picked up an occasional hog, not human, and I am ashamed to tell of what once seemed a feat, that I once shot fifty of the creatures without moving from my tracks. This was in the Big Cypress and the current description of a corduroy road through that swamp, "Fust log, then alligator" wasn't much out of the way.

The sportsman fishes for fun or excitement but never for fish and there are bigger fish than the tarpon on the Florida coast to gratify these tastes. There are sharks, sawfish and sea-cows, dolphins and devil-fish, although two of these are mammals and not fish. I have had glorious sport with all of them but no picture is sharper in memory than an afternoon in a storm-tossed canoe in tow of the biggest and gentlest of the creatures named.

I struck my first devilfish on March 10, 1885 in the Gulf of Mexico near Sanibel Light. With my companions I was on a nine ton sloop and the fish towed us until the coast at the foot of the Lighthouse was beneath the horizon. By this time the fifty rifle bullets that had been fired into him so weakened him that we

A Fight With a Devilfish

were able to tow him to the beach at the entrance to Estero Bay where we held an autopsy on the mountain of flesh we had captured.

It was in a bight of the Gulf between Sanibel and Estero that I found my first devilfish and it must have been the home of the monsters, for seldom in the years that followed did I fail to find from two to twenty of them in these same waters. They usually swam a little below the surface and were hard to find from the deck of a cruising boat, but looking down from the masthead they were plain as the nose on your face. At first I hunted them from the deck of the cruising boat, but that sport grew tame and in later years I struck them from a little skiff and once from a canoe the story of which I am telling. My skipper was accustomed to sculling me up to the monsters in a little skiff from which I threw my harpoon but when I asked him to paddle me in a light fourteen foot canoe he begged me to take the skiff, because the water was rough, the weather threatening and the canoe would capsize. I told him I wanted the canoe because the water *was* rough and the weather *was* threatening, for the canoe would live where the skiff or the cruiser itself would be swamped.

A harpoon with four hundred feet of half-inch line was put into the canoe and it was arranged that after the devilfish had been struck the cruising boat should maneuver to get between the canoe and the fish and pick up the line. This could then be made fast to the windlass and the devilfish played therefrom.

As I neared the fish the wind had increased and the

canoe was so tossed by the rising waves that I kept my feet with difficulty. As we approached the monster he was swimming toward us and we could see that he was about eighteen feet across the wings while his cavernous, open mouth was three feet in diameter and appeared quite capable of swallowing our entire outfit. It seemed an inauspicious moment to strike the creature and he was allowed to pass unmolested beneath the canoe. He was so near that a playful motion of one of his wings lifted the craft half out of water. It was then easy to see that had I struck with my harpoon, a blow given in earnest instead of in play would have shattered the canoe and tossed its occupants bruised and battered into the air. It was some minutes before another chance came and then with the hurling of the harpoon a wave from the wings of the devilfish sent out a deluge of water that tossed the canoe like a cork and landed me on the coil of line on the bottom of the craft. The skipper steadied the canoe and saved us from being capsized, but when I had righted myself I found that the half-inch line which was streaming over the bow of the canoe had a turn around my ankle which was already burning from the friction. I thrust my foot against the bow of the canoe and clutching the line with my hands succeeded at the cost of torn and blistered flesh in checking the flow of the line until the canoe had taken up the gait of the devilfish. The fish was traveling in the eye of the wind and the canoe aided by the paddle of the skipper met the waves squarely, but whenever it fell from its course and water and wind

A Fight With a Devilfish

caught the side of the bow I felt my position to be a perilous one. The boatman could not help me for if he had moved toward the bow of the canoe the craft would have swamped at once. He opened his knife and tossing it beside me urged me to cut the line, but just then the devilfish slackened his speed and I got hold of the line beyond my imprisoned ankle which I soon released. The strain had been a long one and my relief was great, but when I looked around for my cruising boat which should have been overhauling us she was half-hull down and with sails hoisted was trying to beat out to us, a hopeless task for the flat-bottomed craft.

"The *Irene's* engine has broken down and she can't beat out to us," said the captain suggestively. I made no reply to this, but the wind was rising, the white caps multiplying while the beam from the revolving light on Sanibel showed that the sun had set. The strain on the line ceased and I hauled it into the canoe until there were only ten fathoms out and these led directly downward. The wind increased and the waves rolled higher as the devilfish started off at railroad speed, this time up the coast, heading shoreward until the breakers were only a mile to leeward and the roar of the surf filled our ears. An hour passed, the wind had increased to a gale and the canoe was so tossed about that I sat in the bottom of the craft to handle the line. The skipper looked shoreward apprehensively and said:

"We've got to go through those breakers to-night and the sooner we start the more chance we will have."

"At the rate we're traveling we'll make Captiva Pass or even Boca Grande before many hours and unless you're afraid, we will go on."

It was a mean thing to say, for my captain didn't know how to be afraid but it effectually closed his mouth. We didn't make either of the passes named for the devilfish changed his course and headed west for a time, then changing again he swam to the southwest, keeping our canoe in the trough of the great waves. They towered above us for a moment, then rolling beneath the canoe lifted it until the screaming wind threatened to blow us out of the water. Sometimes the devilfish stopped swimming and appeared to rest upon the bottom and then the canoe drifted to leeward after which it lay bow to the wind riding the waves like a ship at anchor. I took in line until the canoe was nearly over the fish and the sudden lift of the waves threatened to capsize it when suddenly the strain on the line ceased as if it had broken or the harpoon pulled out. But as I was taking in the line the huge form of the devilfish came to the surface beside the canoe. It lay on the water rising and falling with the waves and slowly waving its great wings as if in play. Its mouth through which the canoe might have sailed was opened wide but with no more hostile purpose than to take aboard the almost microscopic creatures which nourish these monsters of the deep. One of its wings, big as a barn door was tossed playfully in the air, within six feet of the canoe and brought down with a crash that would have smashed the canoe to smithereens if it had struck it.



Together we rushed the canoe into the first breaker.

A Fight With a Devilfish

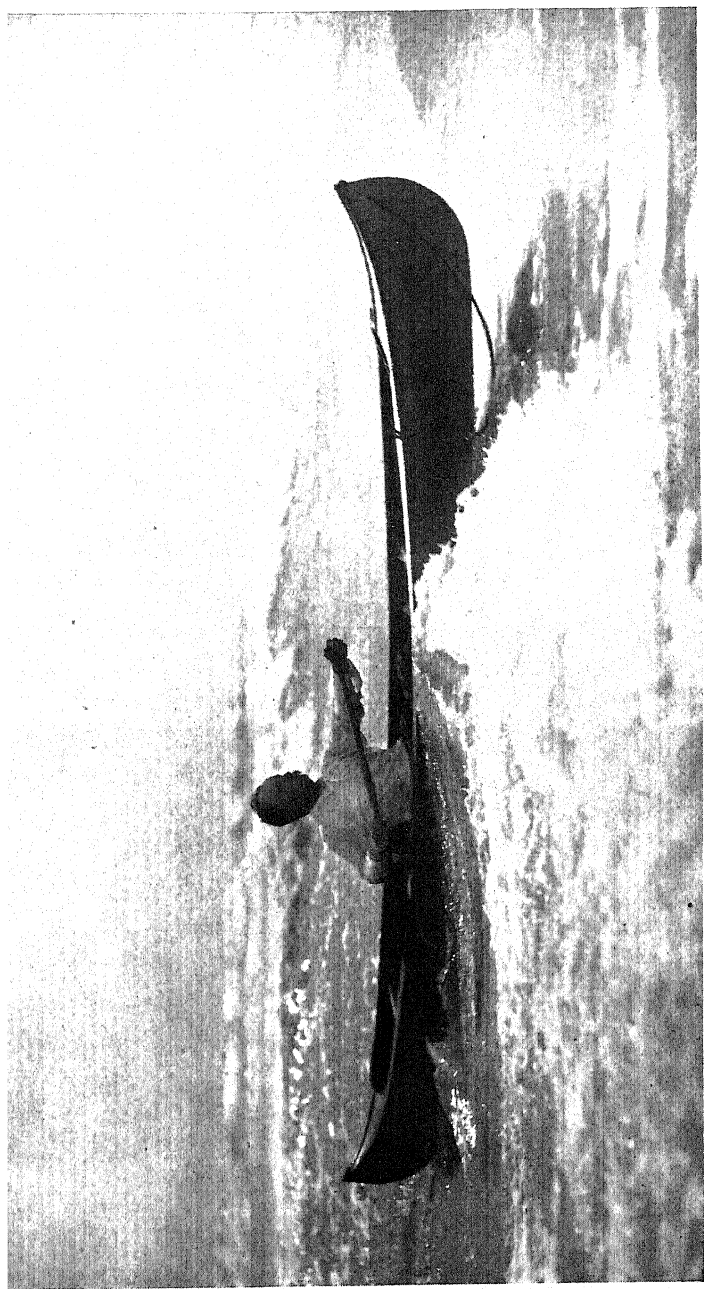
The devilfish seemed to have forgotten all about the harpoon and as I didn't care to remind him of it I paid the line out quietly and drifted away. When a score of yards from the fish I cut the line, saying to the captain, "We have had so much fun out of him that I am willing to let him go."

"I am glad he felt the same way," was the captain's retort to which I contributed a silent "Amen."

When I picked up the paddle to steady myself as well as the canoe and turned the craft toward the shore, I was silent for the scene was too solemn for talk. The canoe was flying before the gale, steadied by the strokes of the paddles as it rose and fell over the big rollers which were breaking with a thunderous roar a few hundred yards before us. As often happens, preceding or following a storm, the water was strongly phosphorescent and when the bow of the canoe struck the first line of breakers the seething foam rose above our heads and bathed us in liquid fire. Seven lines of breakers were taken in quick succession and while spray dashed over our heads seldom did more than a pint of solid water come aboard. When the last wave swept us far up the beach we stepped quickly out upon the sand and dragged the canoe through the receding foam beyond reach of the waves that followed. We carried the canoe a mile toward the lighthouse when we were met by a sailor and the cook of our cruising boat who were in great anxiety about us.

The motor of the cruising boat had broken down as we had surmised, and it took half a day to fix it but

the captain and I put in happy hours with the little canoe in the surf. Together we rushed it into the first breaker when, if not swamped I tumbled aboard and seized the paddle while he steadied and held the canoe pointed to the next incoming breaker. By desperate work with the paddle I usually had the craft in hand in time to surmount this wave and thereafter the task of crossing the successive breakers was easy. Then, when clear of them all it was a joy to turn the canoe and choosing a big wave paddle and ride upon its crest through all the tumultuous foam and roar of its breaking, sweeping up the beach with all the enthusiasm with which a cowboy strikes town after a round-up.



Sweeping up the beach with all the enthusiasm with which a cowboy strikes town after a round-up.

THE LAY OF THE LOGGERHEAD



A strange body with a top like that of a lake steamer.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAY OF THE LOGGERHEAD

ONE who takes a summer stroll, by the light of the moon, on a Florida beach, may see a strange body, with a top like that of a lake steamer, ploughing through the sand by means of four propeller blades. The curious craft is a loggerhead. Although her life begins on the land, she returns to it never, excepting to lay the foundation of other lives. Selecting a place above high-water mark, she digs a hole in the beach with her hind flippers, which she dips deftly and alternately in the sand, scooping it up by flipperfuls and rounding the resulting cavity into the half of a perfect sphere. When she has dug the nest as deep as her flippers permit she deposits in it from one hundred to two hundred eggs, replaces the sand, which she packs over them, and smooths its surface until the nest can be found only by thrusting rods into the sand. The loggerhead is so earnest in the performance of her function that she is not easily distracted from her work, and I have stood beside her and watched the proceedings until the sand had been leveled above the nest. Then she scuttled away at her best speed for her home in the Gulf. Her trail, as it leads from and returns to the water is broad and deep, excepting for a few feet about the nest, where it

is concealed with a cunning calculated to mislead the coons and wildcats, which view turtle eggs as domestic cats regard canaries.

The number of eggs in the nests which I have examined has varied from ninety-six to one and hundred and ninety. I have tried hatching the eggs in a box filled with sand taken from beside the nest, which I carried in my cruising boat. It was seventy days before the funny little miniature loggerheads began to scramble out of the sand. This was some ten days in excess of the accepted period of incubation, and was doubtless due to my inexperience as an incubator. When the newly hatched loggerheads were carried to the beach and turned loose, one by one, each of them scurried to the Gulf by the shortest route and with a directness that gave evidence of an intelligence inherited from perhaps thousands of generations of their species.

The land locomotion of the loggerhead is so slow that she is easily caught on the beach, and when she has been turned over on her back she is quite helpless. The expert catches her by the edge of her shell and the hind flipper as she runs, and, aided by her momentum as he tips her up, turns her neatly and quickly over on her back. To lift slowly one side of a big, widely flapping loggerhead, until she is upset, is the clumsy way and calls for more muscle than the average amateur usually carries. When I turn a loggerhead I usually go over with her, which is not considered good form by experienced turtlers.

The trail of the loggerhead is so distinct that it can

The Lay of the Loggerhead

be seen by moonlight and followed to the clump of grass behind which the reptile is digging her nest. The Camera-man and I walked the beach one night with a barefoot sailor boy until the moon had set. As we were returning in the darkness the boy felt, with his feet, the fresh trail of a turtle. Following it, we found and turned the loggerhead that made it. After the Camera-man had taken a couple of flashlights of her we left the creature on her back until the next morning, when we required her to sit for pictures by daylight before we turned her loose.

To the man-with-the-gun, cruising among the Ten Thousand Islands and threading the tidal waterways which are called rivers, the loggerhead offers perennial amusement. The sportsman sits in the bow of his craft, with his rifle at ready, scanning the placid surface of the smoothly flowing river. Suddenly the water mirror is broken by a yellowish head with round eyes and a parrot beak. The rifle cracks and a leaden cylinder strikes the water near where the turtle's head was seen. It is a pretty game, equally amusing to the loggerhead and the man, and alike harmless to both. I have seen hundreds of these shots fired, but never one that imperiled any living creature excepting, possibly, some stray tourist around the bend of the river in the line of flight of the ricochetting missile. Sometimes when a skiff is floating quietly with the tide, its occupant sees beside it, within reach of his hand, the big head of a turtle, which instantly disappears with a snort of apology for the intrusion. On a calm, hot day in the Gulf of Mexico one may see a four-hun-

dred-pound loggerhead lying asleep on the surface of the water. His broad, barnacle-covered, moss-grown back, like a little lone islet, invites investigation, and a skiff can often be silently sculled so near that the boatman can go overboard and seize the creature before he awakens. The man, or boy, resting on the back of the turtle with hands under the edge of his upper shell, holds the reptile fore and aft, so that every motion of his flippers serves to keep him on the surface. Twice I have seen this done from my own skiff; the next time I mean to do it myself.

Another way to catch loggerheads is to peg them. A little iron peg, with a small harpoon line attached, is held loosely in a socket in the end of a light pole. When the sharp peg, with the weight of the muscle-driven pole behind it, strikes the shell of the turtle, it enters the armor of the creature and holds like a nail driven into an oak plank. There are drawbacks to the amateur's enjoyment of the sport, for the reptile is active and elusive, the refraction of the water will make the most accurate throw of the weapon miss the quarry by a foot, and the proportion of misses to hits is a hundred to one.

The loggerhead is always obligingly ready to fill in the gaps in a cruising life. If a big wind keeps the sails furled and the anchor down, the cruisers can always stretch a net across the channel of any stream. Then, when tidal slack-water permits the net to fish, and the floats begin to bob under the surface, you can go out with your boatman in the skiff, pretty sure to find a big loggerhead in the toils. Each of you

The Lay of the Loggerhead

will grab a flipper, and at first you will do well to let your boatman take the one nearest that big scissors-like head, which can shear off fingers as the daughters of Themis snipped threads. There is a beautiful knack in taking aboard a skiff a turtle of which the two of you could scarcely lift the half. You hoist on the flipper of the upside-down reptile and drag him across the side of the skiff until the water begins to pour over the gunwale of the craft, on which the creature will then be balanced. A strong pull on the turtle as you throw yourself backward, tips him over into the skiff, and the quantity of water that comes aboard with him measures your inexperience. There is always a fair chance that as the loggerhead slides into the skiff over one side you will tumble out of it over the other.

As more loggerheads get in the net you will disentangle them, which is exciting in its way, only to catch them again in another minute. Sometimes you will find in the net a gentle, grass-fed green turtle which you will treat kindly and stow away in the shade, with a block of soft wood under his head for a pillow, until you are ready to stew him.

The eggs of the loggerhead, with their parchment shells, like the lay of a limeless hen, are nourishing and palatable, especially to one who has learned to eat them raw. After you have acquired that taste you neither measure nor count your portion. You simply eat all there are. I once offered a boatman a plate containing about twenty eggs, and he shook his head, saying:

"I like 'em, but it ain't worth beginnin' on less 'n four dozen."

The result of cooking turtle eggs is uncanny, for no amount of boiling sets the albumen of the egg or destroys its transparency. The flesh of the creature is red and firm as beef, for which it is sometimes mistaken, but its peculiar flavor is distasteful to those whose prejudices have been awakened by its classification as a reptile.

In the near future, when the study of the great, living wild creatures of to-day will have to be carried on in museums or zoos, or at best within reservation fences, the loggerhead will still be in business at the old stand, habits and habitat unchanged, popping under the surface of the water of gulf or river, at sight of a gun, and bobbing up serenely to welcome a nature lover.



You neither measure nor count your portion, you simply eat
all there are.

TARPON AND THE MOVIES

CHAPTER XXIII

TARPON AND THE MOVIES

MANY have been my trips to Florida, but the last one had a new *motif*—we carried a motion-picture camera. My rôle on previous occasions had been to supply “human interest” for the Camera-man, and take any risk at his command, with full knowledge that any awkward pose might be preserved forever. But now conditions promised to be still more trying. Formerly it took the Camera-man some seconds to change his plates, and I had this respite, but now his crank would register a continuous performance. How paralyzing to consider that 1,000 exposures a minute might be made and forever would our gyrations be perpetuated and broadcast the impressions be sown!

The situation was serious, but there was one means of escape. I would act as assistant to the Camera-man and thus keep out of the limelight. My friends should be the actors and I would help to record their antics!

We received our camera and films at the railroad station, ten minutes before the starting of our train for Florida. We had a few minutes’ instruction as to working the machinery of the camera, which was simple enough. The film was to be threaded from one spool in the camera to another in a way made ob-

vious by the construction of the machine. When the scene was to be pictured the lens was pointed toward it and the handle turned twice every second. This exposed one foot of film every second on which sixteen pictures were taken.

There was nothing to trouble us so far. Either of us could turn a crank, and the Camera-man was the best in the business of taking snapshots at tarpon in the air. But another point was insisted upon which if enforced would knock things endwise for us. It was stated to be an imperative condition that the camera be screwed to a tripod which must then have a solid foundation. A battle with the Boers could be faked among Jersey hills or a tame lion pose for a bloodthirsty beast of the wild, but there are no tame tarpon to be hired nor actors who can dress the part. No, the motion-picture machine must be held as we had held other cameras and the chance be taken of the motion destroying the picture.

We had often suggested to motion-picture men that they get a series of tarpon pictures, but some of them doubted the profit of the thing and others its possibility. Yet when we arrived at Fort Myers, ready for the tarpon cruise, we found the professionals had been there and hired a big outfit for the work. I was told that the camera had been fixed upon a large boat while the hired guides fished in their smaller boats around it, but that the result had been failure. It remained to be seen whether we could succeed while violating the rules of the motion-picture game better than the professionals while observing them.

There are two ways of fishing for tarpon—one suits the sybarite and the invalid, the other suits me.

The trend of the times is toward specialization and even our sports are syndicated. A tarpon guild has arisen and individual initiative has been crushed. The idea has permeated fishing circles that to catch tarpon one must first go to some stylish dealer to be fitted with, or to, an outfit, as a tailor might dress him for a dinner. Thereafter, from some costly inn near fashionable fishing grounds he must submit himself to a so-called guide at a wage of six dollars a day, plus fancy charges for bait and such other expenses as a practical imagination can suggest.

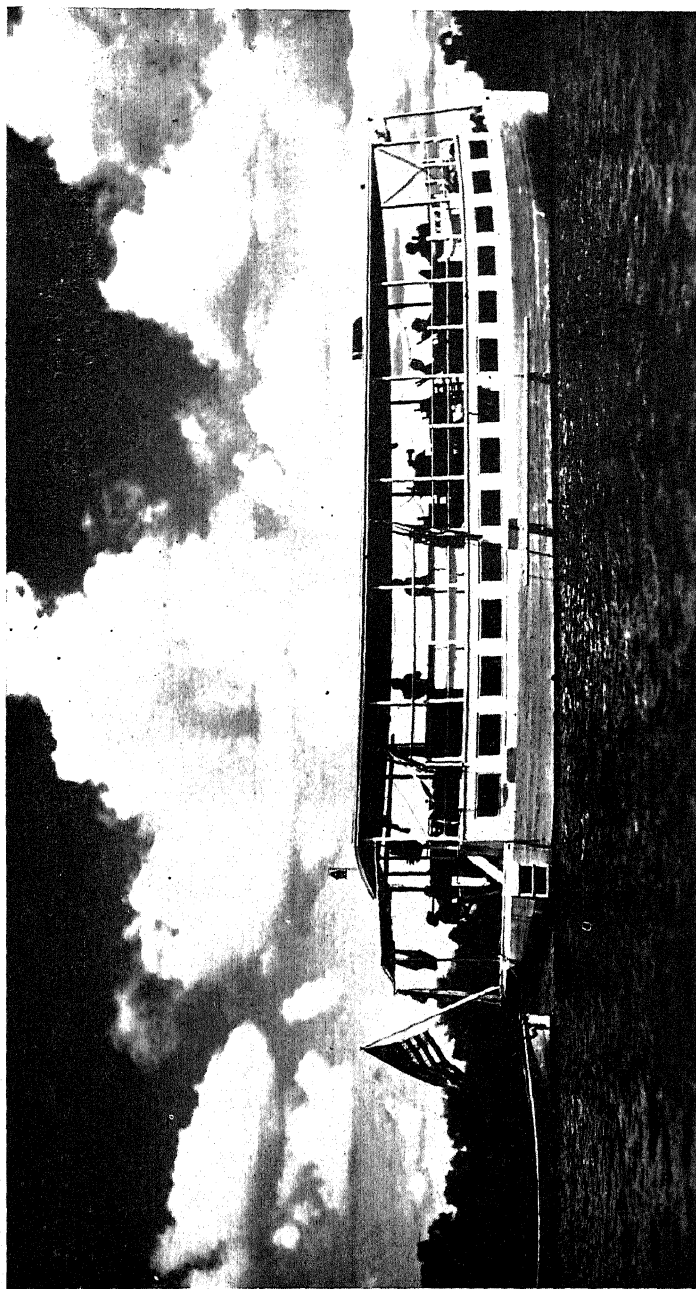
More and more has the game grown costly as the wonderful sport has become known. Houseboats have been constructed, fitted with every convenience and luxury and manned by men with knowledge of the coast and of many of the haunts of the tarpon. When the sportsman's private guide has had his breakfast and his smoke, if wind, weather and tide meet his approval, he fills the tank of his launch with gasoline and takes his customer aboard. Churning the water with his three-horse-power engine he threads with his craft the channels of river or pass, while the fisherman sits in his easy, revolving arm chair, trailing from his costly tackle a strip of mullet as bait.

I have no thought to disparage the game, which is really worth the candle. If the season is well chosen and the captain knows his business, which most of them do, the sportsman will get plenty of tarpon with a minimum of exertion.

The practical way to get into the game is to charter a houseboat from any port on the west coast of Florida and step aboard from your private car at Boca Grande, Fort Myers, or any available station on the Flagler road. Thereafter you are in the hands of your captain and you may be sure, *if you have selected the season aright*, that you will have the prettiest fishing in the world, presented in its most up-to-date form, and available to every man, woman, or child of your party. The expenses may run into hundreds of dollars per diem, although if alone, and parsimonious, you might manage to cut them down to fifty.

The other extreme, of simplicity if not of sense, calls for a companion and a canoe. Outside of railroad fare and the cost of the canoe, the expense of a month's outing would be negligible, hardly more than the bill of an east coast hotel for a day. On a similar trip the clothes I stood in cost less than five dollars, and I believe that included the cost of a dollar watch which later I threw at a coon. The tarpon caught by the lesser outfit would compare with those taken by the other in the proportion of several to one, while of the timid creatures of the wild, seen by the canoeists as they silently paddled through river and bayou, the ratio would be almost as infinity to nothing.

Yet, despite all I have written, our recent tarpon-motion-picture excursion was of the *de luxe* variety. Of course, it was in the summer, since that is the tarpon season, besides being altogether delightful on



Houseboats have been constructed fitted with every convenience and luxury.

that coast in other respects, although it would take a surgical operation to get these ideas into the conventional tourist head. That through years of experience no summer night has been made sleepless or day oppressive by heat on that coast fails to impress the conventionalist who invariably closes a discussion with his poser:

“How about mosquitoes?”

I have suffered frightfully from these beasts, but it was on a salmon stream. While fishing on the Miramichi, Joe Jeffereson bet me that I couldn't cast for salmon for five minutes without brushing the insects from face or hands. There were mosquitoes, black flies, and sand flies, and I stood the torture for about half the time, yielding then to keep from going crazy. Looking back over thirty years, if insects have seriously troubled me while tarpon fishing, the incident has left no furrow in my memory.

Our happy little party of five set forth from Fort Myers in pursuit of adventures. As we cruised down the coast from Pine Island Sound there was added to my social pleasure the joy of reminiscence, awakened by every curve and cape of the shore, every pass and inlet, bay, river, and house. I had paddled down that same coast with the Camera-man, in a forty-pound, fourteen-foot canoe, and I wanted to head the big boat to the east and again run through the surf to the shore.

As we entered the rivers, passing rookeries familiar to me, I fancied the birds were the same, yet how sadly depleted in numbers since I first made acquaintance

with the streams. None of my manatee friends were to be seen in the waters where often I had called upon them, and I was disappointed that alligator acquaintances had not remained on the banks where I had left them.

I had long known the Big Cypress, Ten Thousand Islands, and the Everglades as a land without law, a country of convicts and a home of mystery worthy of its title of "Darkest Florida." There were tragedies told of each river, many keys hid a story of crime and the prettiest place near the coast had long been owned by a desperado who to me had been a kindly host.

What a thriller his story would have made for the movies! And the terrible drama of his execution! Nothing that the villainous Villa could have offered the movie men in the shape of a battle in exchange for a share in the gate receipts could have exceeded it in horror.

This outlaw, who was well-connected, was a picturesque feature of the country which he dominated for years, ordering settlers from near his domain and removing with his rifle those who neglected to depart. It was common report that he settled all accounts with a thirty-eight and the estimates of his homicides were never less than two figures and some even reached three. Yet with all the reports of his maniacal fierceness that abounded, to me he seemed "as mild-mannered a man as ever scuttled a ship or cut a throat."

He disarmed all officers sent to arrest him and was only eliminated by a bunch of fourteen of his nearest

neighbors just after he had cancelled his indebtedness to two men and a woman by sending them to another world. His executioners riddled his body with bullets, leaving few of his bones unbroken. Their excuse was that their victim had snapped both barrels of his shot gun at them and when the cartridges failed to explode had drawn his revolver.

Non-explosive cartridges were not the kind the murdered man was in the habit of carrying, but I never commented upon this in conversation with any of his executioners, most of whom I knew. There is an etiquette of that coast which I have often ignorantly violated by expressing horror of certain homicides to men whom I learned later had committed them. From among my own guides or boatmen I remember seven who were either murderers or were murdered.

Tarpon abounded in the bayous and streams about this center of tragedy and each day we set forth from the houseboat, our friends with their tackle, from tarpon to trout rods, in launch, skiff, or canoe, while the Camera-man and I followed in a power boat ready to chronicle sport with plate or motion-picture film. Much of the work was in narrow, crooked streams where we couldn't even keep in sight of the other craft, but we were usually somewhere between them, and when Tim's wild-Indian yells or the more civilized shouts of our friends shattered the air, our picture craft was sent flying around the corners of the crooked stream.

There was small opportunity to maneuver for posi-

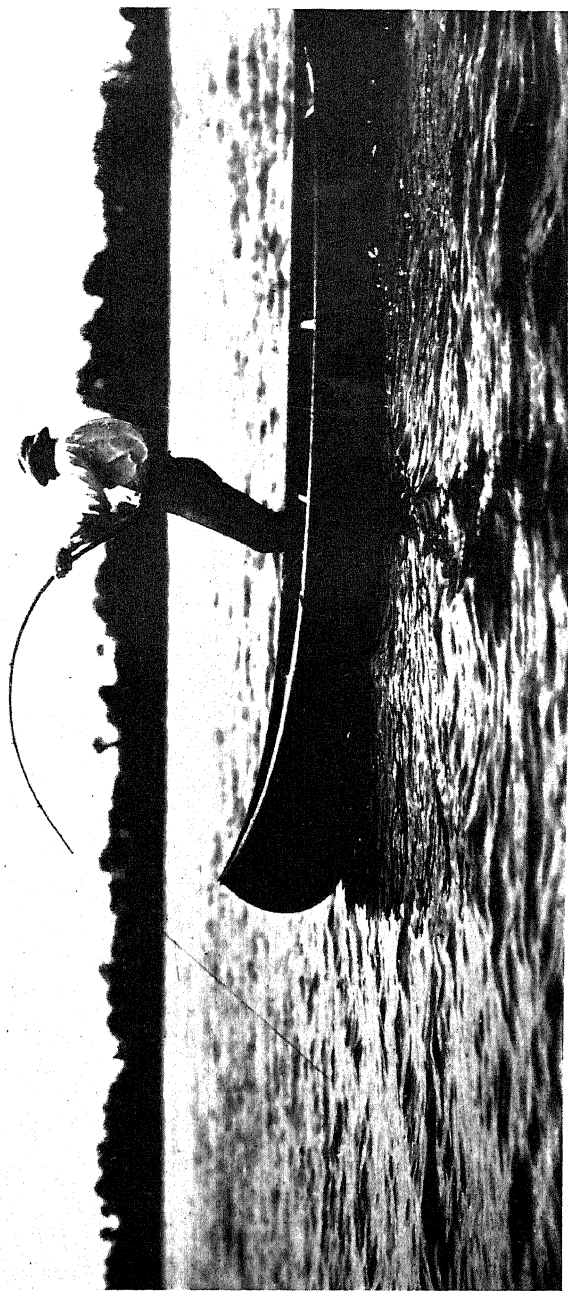
tion and we had to take our chances as they came. We couldn't grind out film at five cents a second on tarpon which had already made several leaps and might not make another in minutes. Yet there is time after the beginning of the jump to get twenty or thirty pictures of the fish and including the commotion in the water and the excitement in the craft it can be run up to a hundred advantageously.

To the fisherman, with his mind filled with a picture of the gorgeous creature that has just shot out of the water and the hope of another leap while his muscles are tingling with the strain on rod or line a five-minute delay is pleasurably filled with emotion. A motion-picture audience of to-day wouldn't stand for the delay and must have a continuous performance of leaping tarpon. This was managed after a fashion and the performance of scores of tarpon were utilized to fill up a reel with action.

Yet the Camera-man counted the result as merely educational and of value in its promise of what may be accomplished. He encountered no obstacle that cannot be surmounted. In this experiment, pictures taken at varying distances, with widely differing surroundings, with the performers in canoe, skiff or launch indifferently had to be merged into one performance which gave an abundance of excitement, but lacked the complete smoothness of finished work.

The larger rivers gave the best opportunity for motion-picture work, as the waves and the roll of pass and Gulf interfered with the steadiness of the camera.

As the Forester was examining his collection of



The tough hickory of the Forester's favorite rod bent into a semicircle.

rods and of reels with their watch-like mechanism and ingenious brakes, he exclaimed:

"Where does the conservation of tarpon come in, and however can he get 'a square deal'? If I had the right kind of influence—in Washington—I'd pass a tarpon law!"

"Fine thing," said I. "What would it be?"

"The rod must be light and the line of six to twelve threads, with an emergency rod for the big fish in the passes and an eight-ounce rod for the little fish up the rivers."

"Anything about the boat?"

"Surely! The fishing must be done from a canoe and only those tarpon counted which the sportsman lands in his craft without help. Then he must return them to the water unless he should want one or two for specimens."

"Amen," I cried, "and may I be around with the camera when your fish gets his innings!"

Was it fate or frolic that favored us one morning?

The Forester threw his tall form back at an angle of thirty degrees. The tough hickory of his favorite rod bent into a semicircle and threatened to snap the line that had been tested to forty-eight pounds.

"Ouch-e-ke-wow!" I shouted, "I wish that line would break."

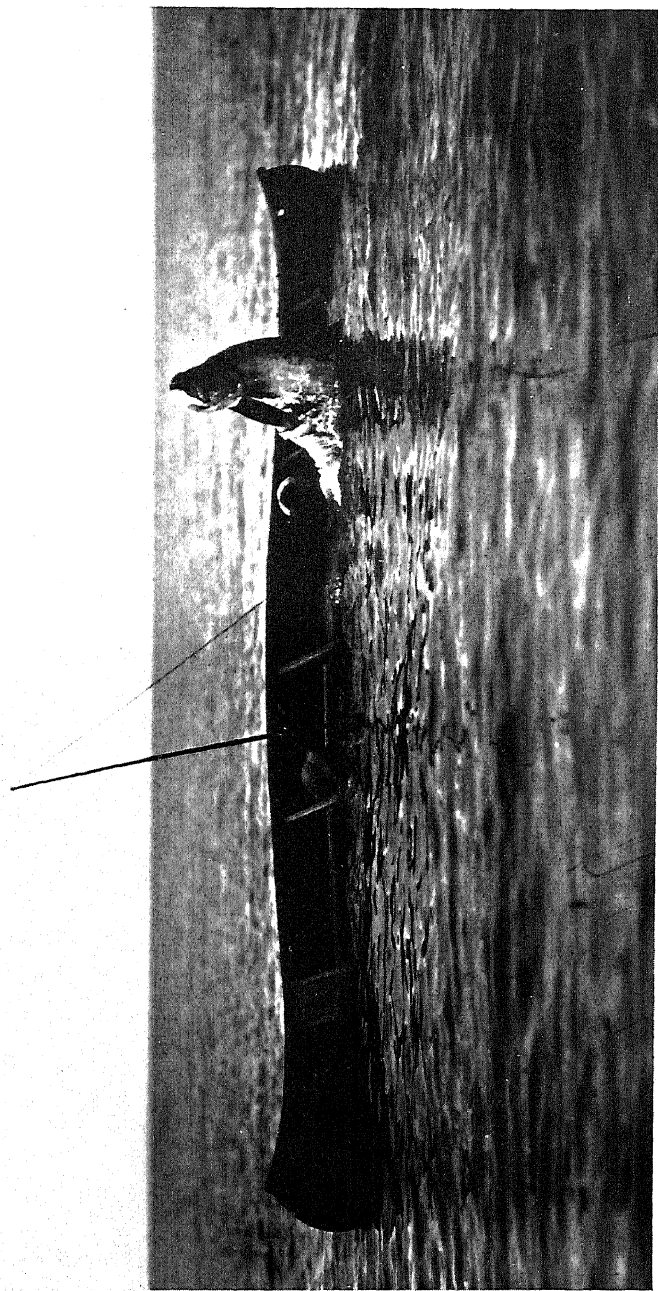
The Forester was fighting a tarpon of nearly his own weight. The fish was in its element and good for a half-hour battle, while the man was in a fickle canoe. Sometimes as the fish leaped into the air and

the line suddenly slackened my hopes ran high, yet the fight was fought to a finish without the catastrophe I longed for. It only remained for the victor to take the tired tarpon into the canoe and, removing one of its brilliant scales as a trophy, return it to its native element, unharmed but enriched by an experience that would make it thereafter the Depew of dinners and diners in tarpon circles.

As the Forester staggered beneath the weight of the tarpon that he sought to lift bodily from the water, the canoe rolled gleefully over. This was in the Gulf of Mexico, just opposite the mouth of Shark River. Our story is not of peril, but only of playful adventure, and not even the name of the river should convey any sinister thought. For the shark of our waters is harmless to man and rewards offered for proof of one having attacked a human being have been unclaimed. I have sought for such evidence myself and have chased up many stories without getting beyond their hearsay quality.

The single exception that occurs to me I have accounted apocryphal. The story was of a fifteen-foot shark that attacked a man and took a huge bite out of him. But my confidence in my informant was shaken when he added that the bite was so big that although the man died the bite got well.

We had many bits of fun with sharks, and catching the brutes may be recommended to athletic sportsmen whose muscles ache for a strenuous game. The toughest rod that can be bought, with a massive reel and a thirty-six thread line are adequate weapons.



As the Forester staggered beneath the weight of the tarpon the canoe rolled gleefully over.

No question of mercy to this repulsive creature is ever raised. The shark is brought beside the skiff, for his teeth would ruin a canoe, and the *coup de grace* administered with a revolver. Bringing the brute to bay may take five minutes or five hours, but no instant of the time is apathetic.

The Forester reveled in this sport and was very successful, capturing the largest number in the least time, but he tampered with the returns, insisting that his record be kept in linear feet and not by number. This gives him a credit of ninety-five feet and some inches of shark, which if in a single piece would weigh something over two hundred tons, which is probably considerably in excess of the total weight of all that he killed.

His leanings have always been toward big game—swordfish and tuna for example—and he took kindly to the chase with a harpoon of a sixteen-foot sawfish. He pursued the creature in a skiff as after a conflict at close quarters with a big sawfish a canoe would resemble the feathered contestant in the famous dispute between the monkey and the parrot. The pursuit of this branch of the shark family is a virile sport and the Forester made two misses before he secured his specimen. The thought of these failures became an obsession and after his return he devoted spare hours to hurling the harpoon, javelin fashion, until he could hit his hat at a distance of fifty feet.

The Camera-man didn't get his innings in the sawfish game. There were several reasons for this.

Firstly it was too late in the day to take a picture. As my space is limited I omit the other reasons.

We began our fishing at Marco, opposite the Leaping Tarpon Hotel, and in three weeks each fisherman of the party struck nearly a hundred tarpon, capturing, and releasing, nearly half that number. With a thousand tarpon to my credit, or discredit, I cared not to add to the score.

Yet I spent one forenoon in a canoe with the Forster to try out a fly rod and light tackle. To his eighteen tarpon strikes I got twenty-four; that he landed more than I was a fortuitous circumstance of which I have not preserved the particulars. The Camera-man was the one who got left, for his pictures had to be suppressed. In total disregard of his artistic feelings I deposited my rapidly accumulating avoirdupois and years in the bottom of the canoe and paddled and fished from that safe but not picturesque position. I am keeping the prints the Camera-man made of us as souvenirs, since there will never be others like them. Henceforth when tarpon fishing from a canoe I shall sit up like a man and a one-time canoeist, and if I go to the bottom it shall be *cum dignitate* even if *sine otio*.

My preference of a hand line to a rod, excepting an eight-ounce rod for the head of the rivers, has been esteemed by many friends an obsession of mine, but many of them are now coming my way. The arrogance of the Syrian General in his comparison of the rivers of Babylon with the Jordan was as nothing to the superciliousness with which the usual up-to-date



The shark is brought beside the skiff and the *coup de grace* administered with a revolver.

tarpon fisherman, with his forty-dollar reel and four-dollar line, regards this form of sport. Yet there are thrills that traverse the tautened line between the tarpon mouth and the fisher's hand which can only be felt with a rod will never feel.

Bret Harte, as in my library the "Based on the dog" an unpublished story, pictured to me in his wonderful way the message he saw as a driver send through the tightened reins to his frightened team as it dashed down the precipitous path across which a tree had fallen. The eight lines in the driver's hands were tautly drawn and over them passed from the human to the equine mind a mandate that dominated, steadied, held the frightened creatures from recoiling in panic and finally sent them, a disciplined team, straight for the barrier. Over it the leaders flew, the wheelers rose, but hampered by their harness, fell upon it, while the stage crashed against the great log and the passengers looked from the opened door down a vertical wall of a thousand feet.

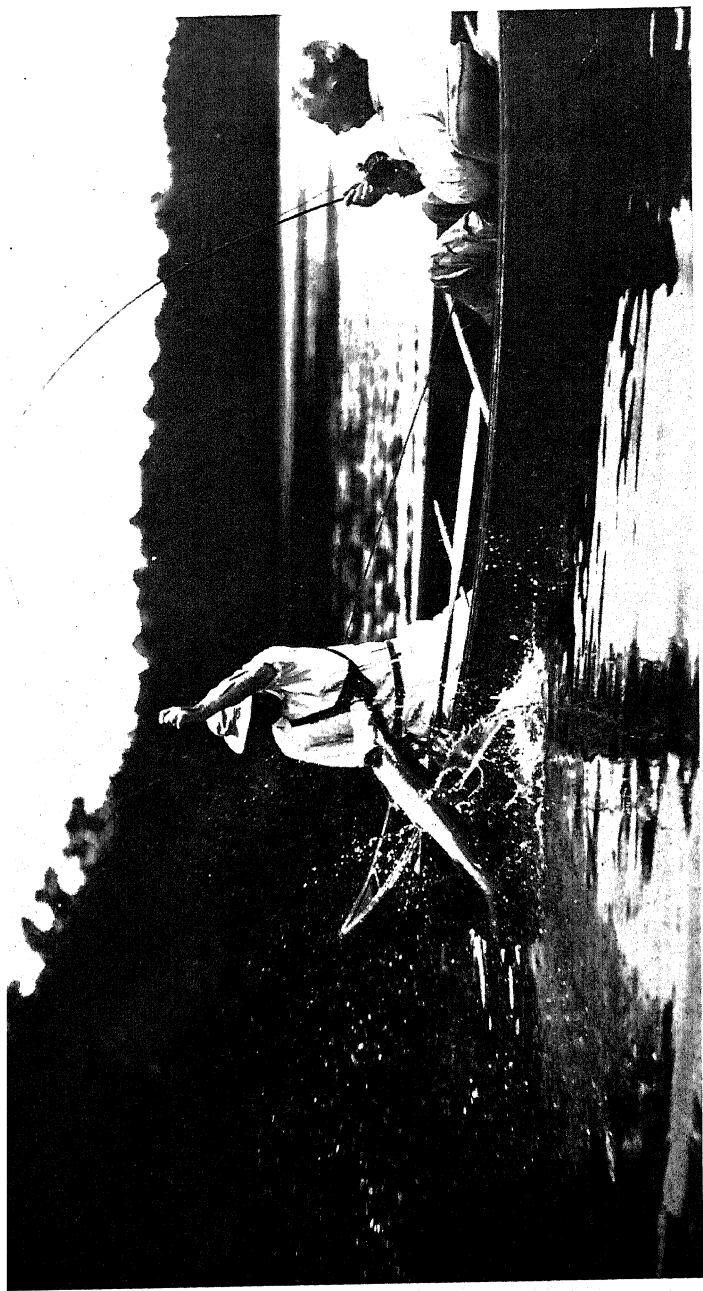
More than once has the picture this artist drew presented itself to my mind as a tarpon has touched the bait I trailed from a light canoe. For the personality of a tarpon was in that touch and as I struck sharply by way of challenge, his defiance came swiftly in the form of a leap many feet in the air, followed by a wild dash that made the five-inch freeboard of my light canoe seem like a narrow margin between the water and me. I sent soothing messages through a line, firmly and steadily held, and returned soft answers to explosions of wrath.

Then when the Camera-man said he was ready for another jump, with twitchings of the line I sent the fish messages that maddened him and as he replied with savage shakes of his head I taunted him in Morse dots and dashes until he manifested his rage by leaping wildly at me. Through alternate coaxing and teasing the gamut of tarpon emotion can be run and when at last the fish floats exhausted beside the canoe a turn of the hand loosens the hook and restores to an honorable enemy his well-earned liberty.

I sing praises of tarpon fishing with a hand line from a canoe, combating the prejudices of a generation of sportsmen. But let us reason together. Compare the ponderous launch with the dancing canoe which vibrates to every mood of the great fish even as it responds to a touch of the paddle. Imagine the thrill that wakens every nerve as you feel through the line the quarry seizing the bait and your own quick strike is followed by the frantic leap high in the air of the well-named Silver King.

Thereafter every twist and turn, every quiver, heart beat, or thought of the fish is telephoned through the tense line. His broad side, glistening in the sun, is of frosted silver, his back of kingly purple. His wild gyrations are puzzling to follow and only the camera can catch the convulsive motion of his gills. Often, too, the camera catches and fixes in the air the hook which the tarpon has hurled far from him.

Do you know any other fish that can approach the brilliant performances of the tarpon? Do you know one of any importance that leaps when struck or if it



I deposited my avoirdupois in the bottom of the canoe and fished from that unpicturesque position.

chance to jump out of its element once, ever repeats the performance while you are playing it?

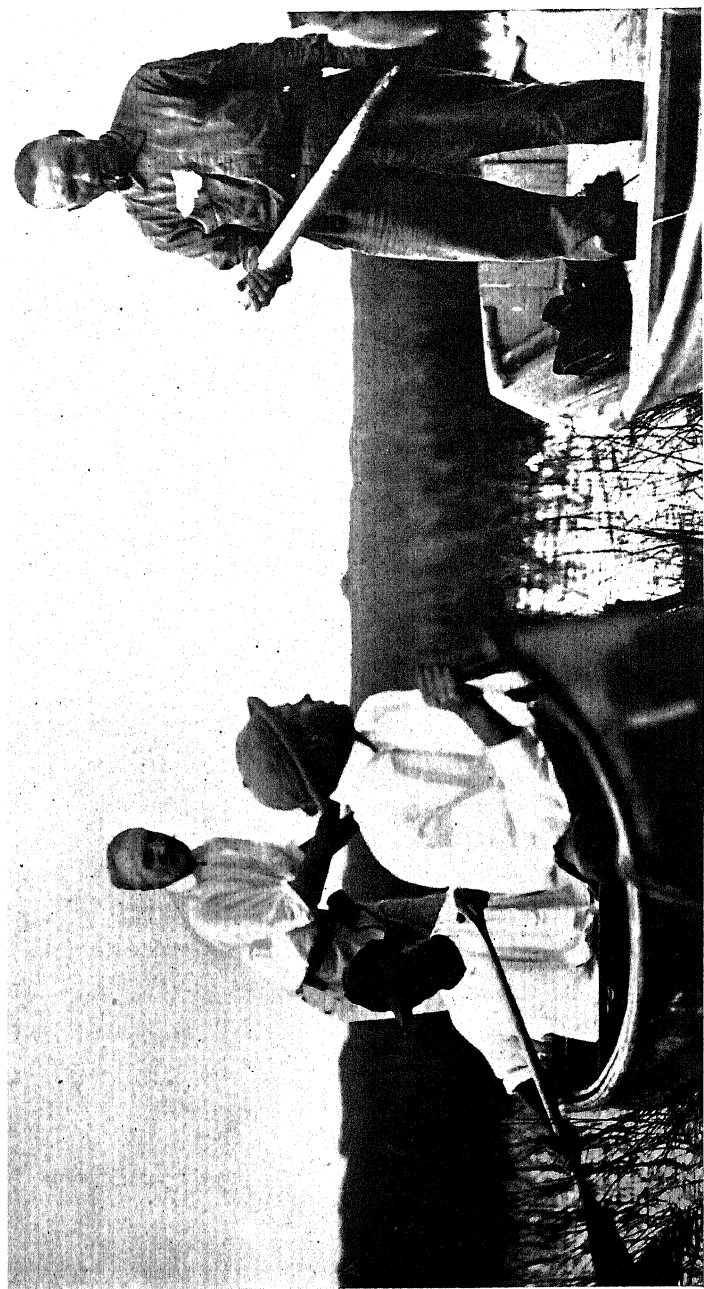
You can play the tarpon to your liking, making the fight fast and furious and ending it in fifteen minutes by drawing your canoe so near the fish that its frantic leaps are beside or over or into your canoe. Or if you don't want to chance a capsize you can play the game quietly and spend half an hour to an hour in landing your quarry, to the accompaniment of continuous sallies punctuated by picturesque leaps, often astonishingly high in the air. Every moment of the struggle is alive with fun and the excitement of anticipation. One may get healthfully tired but there are no aching muscles. The strain is direct and not multiplied by the leverage of the rod. When a hand line is used with much vigor, the tarpon often conserves the sportsman's time by leaping into his arms and landing itself in the canoe.

I don't care for hard work for its own sake and I wouldn't wind a windlass and hoist like a derrick for eight or ten hours without sight of the game for any record or even the right to wear a button. Salmon fishing is perhaps nearest in line to the sport of which I write, but it lacks the picturesque leaping which is the feature of tarpon fishing. Then, too, the expense of the salmon sport is becoming prohibitive. It costs a fortune to own a section of a salmon stream and the right to fish in a favorite pool is beyond price, while each captured salmon represents on the average days of toil. I can point out tarpon streams by the hundred miles and pools without number where, in the

season, each hour of fishing will average more than one tarpon and all this wonderful opportunity is free as air.

Are there two of you, nature lovers, who want to get into the tarpon game on the ground floor of cost and comfort? Hire a launch with a skiff and engage its owner as captain, oarsman, cook and general factotum, a man unspoiled by conventional sportsmen and as ready to turn his hand to any required work as you should be yourself. Provide by purchase a light canoe, which you can sell after you are through with it and lay in supplies as modestly as your nature will permit. With the fish you will catch from the start, the oysters you may gather from the trees, the clams, hard and soft, you may tread or dig, the palmetto cabbage your factotum will cut, the fruits you will find, and the vegetables you will have chances to buy, it is repletion instead of starvation you will have to fear.

Much of the pleasure of your trip will depend upon your choice of a boatman. A fair knowledge of the coast is needed, cheerfulness is vital, while a sense of humor goes far to make a joyful outing. I have in mind a boatman of this type who contributed to the comfort of our recent trip by his interest in all our plans, his anxiety to forward them, and his humor. His knowledge of the habits of wild creatures was wide and often the question rang out—"Where's Tim?" always echoed by the cheery response—"Coming, sir!" followed by the advent of the man, alert and eager to be of service.



In the Everglades.

Of his scores of humorous replies I will mention two. As we were looking at a lot of water turkeys the Forester asked:

"Are water turkeys good to eat, Tim?"

"They are fishy unless you know how to cook them, but then they are all right."

"How do *you* cook them?"

"Skin them first, cut off the breasts and throw away the rest. Then I put the breasts between two bricks, set them on a bed of hot coals, and keep them there till I can stick a fork through the brick into the bird."

The cavally, or jackfish, is a hard fighter, offering sport to the angler, but not usually cared for as food. Yet there is a broad layer of dark flesh in this fish that has a meaty flavor which I like. I was defending my taste to my companions when Tim chipped in on my side, saying:

"I like jacks first rate when they are fixed my way."

"How is that?"

"Just as you fellers tell about planking shad up north. I split a good fat jackfish, tack it on a board and sprinkle it good with salt and pepper and put on some butter if I can get it. I set it up before a hot fire and keep up the fire till the fish is crisp on the outside and cooked through and through. Then I strip it off, throw it in the fire and eat the board."

I haven't given Tim's real name, firstly because I am not advertising individuals, and secondly—I may want him myself next summer.

WILD LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

CHAPTER XXIV

WILD LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

THE chief interest in the following article lies in the date of its publication. It was written in 1889 for Wilson's "Photographic Mosaics," and was published in that book in December of the same year. I believe it was the first publication of the kind, yet for nearly five years I had practiced and advocated what I there preached. Every possibility of camera work suggested in the article was taken from my own experience, from stalking big game in the Rockies to flash-light work in the Ten Thousand Islands of Florida. In those early days the tools of the trade were inadequate. Plates lacked sensitive-ness, shutters were of clumsy contrivance and flash-lights had to be improvised by loading shotgun cartridges with magnesium. In comparison with later accomplishments the results were inferior, but it was pioneer work and covered a broad field, from bears to humming birds and from flying squirrels to flying fish.

I treat the subject in fuller detail in a forthcoming book, now in the publishers hands, entitled "Wall Street and the Wilds."

The article from Wilson's "Photographic Mosaics" here follows in full.

"CAMERA vs. RIFLE

"By A. W. Dimock

"The Camera as a weapon for sportsmen is becoming deservedly popular. Used incidently at first, to preserve mementoes of the successful use of rifle, fowling-piece, rod and harpoon, it is now, in the hands of many, the weapon itself, the results of its employment being the trophies sought. To such the chase has not proved less exciting, its labors less arduous, nor its results less satisfactory. To stalk an elk successfully with the rifle is not difficult; to get within camera range requires the patience of an Indian. The hunter who with camera pursues the 'big horn' must possess the nerves of an Alpine guide, and the endurance of a chamois hunter.

"Stealing undiscovered within rifle-shot of the wary beaver has long been accounted a test of woodcraft. To photograph him at work seems quite as laudable an ambition, and is obviously not less difficult. A startled antelope is about as hard to hit with a camera as with a rifle. Finders are useless. The sportsman must have sights on his camera or learn to fire by instinct, as the expert with his fowling-piece.

"Fire hunting for deer becomes fascinating when the weapon is a camera, reinforced by a pistol charged with magnesium.

"The eye of the alligator shining from under the mangrove bushes in the glare of a bull's-eye lantern; and as red as the planet Mars, is a target never to be forgotten. The lightning flash of the magnesium,

the reflections in the water, the illumination of the dark bayou, the deep shadows, the reptilian monster, and the doubly intense blackness which follows, will surely be found pictured upon the brain of one who has seen it, as were the ancient characters upon the tissues of Rockwood's Egyptologist. The Florida tourist who prefers the Everglades to the 'Ponce de Leon,' can yet find small ponds where a hundred living alligators may be secured at a shot. Find such a one; adjust your camera, take the bulb in your teeth; send a rifle-ball through the eye of one of the reptiles, and catch his first jump with the camera, and you will have made a double shot, which will take precedence in memory of any brace of woodcock with right and left.

"The photograph of a few hundred flamingoes standing with military precision in a single line is a pleasanter memento than a few scarlet feathers or a stuffed bird. The soaring man-of-war hawk, the snowy gulls, the pelican diving for his prey, the rolling porpoise, and the beautiful whip ray, with their occasional jumps ten feet in the air, are for the camera the best of game, for the rifle the worst. Prairie chickens, quail, etc., may be hunted with the aid of pointers or setters, and if one chances to miss the birds and hit his favorite dog as he stands with one paw uplifted, head slightly turned, tail rigid, his whole body quivering with excitement, the picture is worth yet more than the game.

"The camera fisherman who attempts the simultaneous management of camera and rod, and se-

cures the leaping salmon or tarpon with the former, scarcely regrets his loss with the latter.

"Camera game is always in season and always abundant. For if the particular animal sought prove elusive, there are always for the sportsman unique bits of scenery, picturesque views upon which no other lens has looked, novel situations and ludicrous incidents worth embalming. His weapon must always be in readiness, not alone for the whirr of the partridge or the jump of the deer. Has he a companion who rashly attempts to pole a Canadian dug-out or paddle an Indian canoe across the rapids, or a friend who mounts for the first time the gentle broncho? Patiently the hunter holds his weapon, bulb in hand, to profit by the inevitable catastrophe. Of course, the pioneers in the sport of hunting with the camera must expect to be misunderstood. One recently riding with a companion through a ravine in Colorado encountered a couple of grizzlies. He presented his camera, his companion his Winchester. As the grizzlies disappeared over the crest of a precipice a thousand feet above them, the companion angrily observed: 'If you were as quick with your rifle as with that (participle) camera, you'd be more useful in this country.'

"In hunting with the camera discretion should be exercised. Should the genial 'road agent' in the peaceful pursuit of his calling, 'get the drop on you,' don't retaliate. It is one of the few occasions when the camera should avoid competition with the rifle. There may be other situations complicated by the im-

mediate proximity of a bear or a panther, when the rifle should take precedence. But the instinct of the sportsman may safely be trusted to recognize this necessity.

"The camera hunter requires a long-range weapon. Toy cameras, tiny plates, and short lenses should be left in the nursery. A moose or deer in the depth of the forest may be captured with a 'Kodak,' but an instantaneous exposure under such circumstances will not develop into a negative which will bear enlargement to visible dimensions.

"In hunting, take a full-plate camera with, say, sixteen-inch lens, and roll-holder. Attach some form of focus index marked plainly, very plainly, from twenty feet upward, also a couple of sights. (Finders are losers.)

"In hunting, a half plate picture is often a fair result of a whole-plate exposure. There is rarely time to arrange distances, adjust with a spirit level, and focus with a microscope. The conditions of photographing an excited grizzly and—say, a mummy, differ in important particulars.

"For time exposures carry a light, compact tripod. Ascertain by calculation or experiment the number of inches that at arm's length from the eye will include, with the lens used, the view upon the plate. A small rule, or its equivalent, held with extended arm at right angles to the line of vision, will then always give instant information, required before every exposure.

"If plates or films are used, learn to change them

in the dark. A dark room for this purpose can be improvised with a blanket anywhere. Glass lanterns always break, and candles in patent holders rarely feed properly. Don't develop a plate during a hunting trip. The time for target practice is before starting. And, besides, that pleasure belongs to your return.

"Then, develop with hydrochinon, living your excursion over in your dark-room in every detail of incident and adventure; print on Aristo paper, placing the print direct from the frame in the simplest of all toning and fixing baths, a twenty-five per cent. solution of hypo with sufficient gold for the prints. Squeegee on ferrotype plate and mount with gelatine paste in a book, which will prove a perennial delight, being a record of pleasure fairly earned, of sport unalloyed with cruelty."

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